

Sunia Geel - Exchange House's new EU project on combating Domestic Violence



The *Sunia Geel* kick off meeting in Dublin: [from left to right] Ovagem Agaidyan (Austria), Carmina Alexiu (Romania), Andrea Klotz (Austria), Felix Goekuezuem (Germany), Ileana Boeru (Romania), Heydi Foster (Exchange House), Simon Finnegan (Exchange House), Martin Kilgus (Germany), Cristian Popescu (Exchange House), Konstantina Zota (Greece), Penny More (Exchange House), Melpomeni Stoltidi (Greece), Ronnie O'Donnell (Exchange House)

Exchange House National Traveller Service was one of many applicants to the EU Commission's Fundamental Rights & Justice Section and was the only Irish organisation selected to lead the project under the Daphne III Programme.

The project

named '*Sunia Geel*'. *Sunia Geel* derives from the Irish Traveller language, Cant. It translates 'take care of yourself' and is viewed as an apt name for what the project aims to achieve – families being valued and supported. The goal of the *Sunia Geel* Domestic Violence project is to prevent and reduce the extent and impact of domestic violence within minority groups and in our case the Irish Travellers. This will be done

by generating education, community awareness and providing support to women, children and young people.

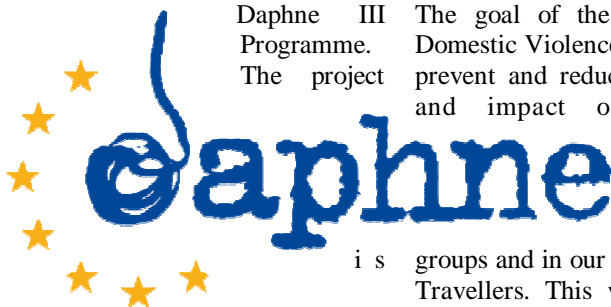
Sunia Geel's partner countries are Ireland, Germany, Austria, Romania and Greece. The specific target groups identified by all the partners include: Irish Travellers, Sinti and Roma in Eastern European States and South East-Europe as well as Muslim migrants in EU member states. All three target groups face similar problems with domestic violence.

The prevalence of domestic

violence within minority groups and barriers to resolving it is *Sunia Geel's* focus in responding to the call to contribute towards the protection of women and children against all forms of violence. The project's goal is to achieve a strategic framework for developing a protective environment that is transferable between different cultural, geographic and national contexts.

Specific problems to be addressed by the project are:

- The high levels of violence against



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"Out of the Pit of Homelessness"
A Visit to the Islamic Cultural Centre
"The Day I met Mary Harney"

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women, children and young people.

- The emotional and psychological impact of domestic violence on children and young people.
- The lack of appropriate support services and understanding of how to work with minority groups by mainstream services.
- Lack of information and cohesion among service users.
- The myths and misconceptions among the general population (including those responsible for providing services to those communities).

The objectives of the project are:

- To increase the knowledge base and skills of service providers in addressing the needs of marginalized, minority groups experiencing domestic violence. This objective acknowledges that Domestic Violence has not been effectively addressed by service providers in the past.
- To generate domestic violence community awareness and address domestic violence from within these communities.
- To support the victims of domestic violence from disadvantaged and marginalized communities through the use of therapeutic interventions. The project aims to empower women, children and young people to make informed decisions.

To develop knowledge and a set of generalizable insights for use in addressing domestic violence within marginalized communities. The strategic approach developed



Ileanna Boeru from ANUP in Romania and Melpomeni Stoltidi from Prolepsis in Greece at the Daphne Kick-Off meeting in Dublin

will be of assistance in other cultural contexts.

The key benefit of this transnational project is to frame innovative solutions based upon experience of working with minority groups and in a range of cultural context. The outcomes will be transferable within these groups, and potentially to other groups dealing with similar problems across the EU.

Exchange House’s *Sunia Geel* project will be providing training on best practice in working with Travellers experiencing domestic violence. These will be taking place between June 2011 and March 2012 for service providers and community groups. On the 13th October 2011 there will be a domestic violence conference in Exchange House to launch the training pack and the domestic violence research findings, during National Social Inclusion Week.

The duration of the project is 24 months and we will keep you posted on new developments.

Save The Date

27th July 2011 Training Course: Best Practice in working with Travellers experiencing Domestic Violence
12th August 2011 Training Course: Best Practice in working with Travellers experiencing Domestic Violence
13th October 2011 Conference on Domestic Violence

Family Support

Parenting - Internet Safety for Children



Penelope More
Family Support
Team Leader

The Family Support Team at Exchange House work with families around parenting. Parenting is probably the most challenging and rewarding role a person will undertake in their lifetime. In recent time Exchange House has received an increasing number of concerns from parents regarding their children's internet use. The Family Support Team has come up with practical ways of addressing this emerging problem with parents.

The internet offers many positive, educational and social benefits to children as well as challenges for parents. It has a vast array of information and it can be a source of entertainment and enjoyment as well. However, children are vulnerable and may be exposed to danger when using the internet.

It is very important for parents to be aware of what their children are watching and listening to on the internet, who they meet and what they share about themselves on line. The challenge for most parents is that children are well conversant with the internet and the cyber world. On the other hand most parents feel overwhelmed, uninformed and ill-equipped to adequately protect their children on line. It is vital that parents educate themselves and understand what dangers currently exist to empower the children on how to both avoid and thwart such dangers. It's essential to tell your children the plain truth about dangers online.

It is important to point out the problems/

dangers associated with children and the Internet.

- Children may be exposed to inappropriate content including pornography, violence, and language.
- Children run the risk of ignorantly giving out personal information thus facilitating data theft.
- Cyberbullying is when a child is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another person using the Internet

Parents need to stand in the gap as the first line of defense against child internet dangers and here are some guidelines parents can teach children about Internet safety.

Children are vulnerable and may expose themselves to danger when using the internet

- Don't give out personal information (Name, Address, Age, School, Birthday, Phone Number, etc.)
- Choose a screen name that doesn't identify any personal information.
- Don't share your password with anyone except your parents. Not even your best friend.
- Do not respond to unwanted, mean, offensive or threatening e-mail, chat room dialogue, or instant messages.
- Don't send pictures of yourself to someone you don't know.
- Never agree to meet someone you met on the Internet.
- Remember people online may or may not be who they say they are.
- Promise to tell an adult if you ever feel uncomfortable while online.

The team is increasingly working with parents around internet safety so they can be empowered to impart the safety rules to their children

Reflections on Education

Ann O'Donnell

FÁS CE Scheme Learner

Today is a day I understand what my education is about

I am learning about my weakness.
To have the understanding of what I have to learn,

To train my brain to work in so many ways and to do good in this way.

I can't complain.

I now know how much wisdom can be in a person

And to know that my brain has a slower learning manner than other people's way of learning

Can help me to build confidence in this world of educated people.

My next step is to learn to master my problem and to achieve better goals
I never did do maths and I know my brain is getting better because it is getting used to education.

My ways of learning are easy
To make your brain do over-time in a short time

Can cause confusion and make you laugh at your mind

To think of how much you have to learn.

And to be amazed at the work in this short time

I am thirty seven years old and back to get education for that two years.

I know I only had my life experience
As a mother I am surprised with myself to know how much I missed out on.

Just a small memory loss over twenty years

To make me laugh at myself now I am thinking.

I am going to work much harder to better my education,

So I can understand with more clarity.
To fix my problem with education and to get over the shock of confusion

Of much I missed out on.

News Travels

Exchange House Addiction Service



Caroline O'Reilly
Addiction Worker



Ronnie O'Donnell
Addiction Counsellor

There is a high prevalence of substance misuse among clients presenting for support at Exchange House National Travellers Service.

The Addiction Service Exchange House addresses problem drug/alcohol use with the National Drug Strategy.

The organisation works from a holistic multi-disciplinary approach.

The Addiction Service in particular works

from a bio-psycho-social perspective and this complements the work with clients.

In cases where clients are stable and ready to pursue education or gain access to the workforce they are referred to the FÁS Community Employment Scheme or the FÁS Local Training Initiative in the Education Department at Exchange House National Traveller Service.

The Family Support Team is central to the holistic approach as we have a team of Social Workers, Family Support Workers and Addiction Workers.

Exchange House Addiction Service supports clients in addressing problem drug/alcohol use in line with the National Drug Strategy. This is done through:

- Individual/couple counselling
- Crisis intervention

- Harm reduction
- Outreach and support to the family home
- Advocacy
- Prison/probation support
- Group work
- Referrals to appropriate services
- Interagency work
- Information and awareness workshops

We offer training on

Best Practice in working with Travellers with Addiction

This training is ideal for individuals, institutions and organisations that work with, or provide services to members of the Traveller community.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Exchange House National Travellers Service opened its doors to A.A on the 14th April 2010. Since its foundation in 1935 the fellowship of A.A has helped hundreds of thousands throughout the world to recover from alcoholism. Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other with the primary purpose to achieve and maintain sobriety.

Alcoholism is a disabling addictive disorder. It is characterized by compulsive and uncontrolled consumption of alcohol despite its negative effects on the drinker's health, relationships, and social standing. Alcoholism is a disease that will ultimately kill you; however before it does it will make your life miserable, and the lives of your entire family and friends. For that reason it is frequently called a Family Disease. Put simply, an alcoholic is one who has lost the power to control the intake of alcohol, once he or she lift the first drink no one can tell where it will end or when it will end. Typically an alcoholic will become undependable, unreliable, irresponsible, sometimes violent and

mostly selfish in the extreme.

Medical science has not found a cure for alcoholism, although it has been recognised as a disease by the WHO. However, the program of A.A is based on a Twelve Step Programme which in essence means living your life in an open and honest way of life. Since its inception in 1935 A.A has been able to bridge that gap. The meetings in Exchange House take place every Monday evening at 6pm. The meetings last for sixty minutes and involve members sharing about their lives, what happened to them and how their lives have turned around for good.

This is the preamble which is read at every A.A meeting worldwide:

- Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from Alcoholism.
- The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop

drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions.

- A.A is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.
- Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

It has been a year since A.A came to Exchange House and to date a number of people have benefited hugely from these meetings. Everything discussed in the meetings is confidential and anonymity is guaranteed. If you have a drink problem and desire to stop drinking you are welcome to join us on Mondays at 6pm at Exchange House. You can become a member of the fellowship simply by deciding you are a member. For more information feel free to contact Exchange House National Travellers Service.

Des

Out of the Pit of Homelessness

Exchange House Family Support Service provides a comprehensive holistic approach to clients and empowers them to make decisions and act independently. This case was co-worked by a social worker and addiction worker. The issues addressed ranged from homelessness, addiction, mental health, child welfare and anti social behaviour. The team worked cooperatively to support the family for two years. This is one of the success stories whereby the family is still stable and progressed well into sustaining their accommodation and have not had any problems with the Gardaí or landlord. One of the children is doing her Junior cert and is motivated to do well in her exams as she is eager to receive the Exchange House National Educational Achievement Award in 2011.

Out of the Pit of Homelessness

My name is Chris* and my wife is Julie*. We are Travellers and married with six children. Me and my family lived in a council house for years and we never imagined ever being homeless one day. It all started one day when my sister came to visit from England and some of my wife's cousin came over as well. There was a lot of drink and what followed was a major fight that brought the guards to our door. The ambulance arrived and two people were taken to hospital more guards came and some three were arrested. First thing Monday morning council officials appeared at our door and we were told that we had to leave because of anti social behaviour. I assumed that if I pleaded I would be given a warning but it was not to be the case. The next thing me, my wife and the kids found ourselves homeless. I was scared and I did not know what to do. I thought of ending it all but for my children's sake I could not do it as I felt responsible for the situation we found ourselves in. Our lives changed overnight, friends and some family members became aloof and distant and this really hurt. For months we moved from one homeless accommodation to the next and things

were getting tough. At the time we had an eighteen month old baby and I was drinking heavily and my wife was heading for a mental breakdown, it was just a matter of time. Honestly the situation was desperate and I did not know what to do or who to turn to and was thinking of moving to England. I have never been at this low state in my life where me and my family were reduced to nothing, we were stripped of our dignity and self worth and the children did not want to go to school as they were being tormented.

One day my wife went to the welfare officer to ask for help and he asked if he could ask a Traveller place called Exchange House if they could help them, she agreed. The next day a social worker came from Exchange House she was relaxed, sat on the couch and talked to us as if we mattered. She did not promise to move mountains but she was there for us, advocating for us and above all made us to start believing in ourselves. This took a while as we went from viewing to viewing to viewing without any success. We were always told that there were too many children. In some cases we were asked if we were Travellers and we were on the verge of packing and going to England. The social worker never gave up on us and ultimately we managed to get a four bedroom private rented house. It was like a miracle. Without Exchange House we would not be here. The Addiction Worker helped me to address the drink problem through counselling.

The greatest gift that restored our pride and self worth was when my daughter received the Educational Award in Exchange House for her Junior cert. She worked hard to get her

cert and deserved it. We all prepared for the day of the awards, we went shopping and on the day went early. We were proud parents and we took loads of photos. This was one of the best days of my life and I thank my social worker for having made it possible for us.

Julie gave this recipe saying it stays in her handbag. She said she makes the best Apple Cake after she attended a women's cooking group. After two and a half years of being homeless on the very first day I cooked in the new house I baked and it felt like home. Allow me to share this special recipe with you.

Kerry Apple Cake

175g/6oz butter
175g/6oz caster sugar
2 eggs, beaten
225g/8oz self-raising flour
2 medium cooking apples, peeled, cored and chopped
1tsp lemon rind
2tbsp Demerara sugar
pinch cinnamon
pinch nutmeg

Preheat oven to gas mark 4/180°C/350°F, and grease and line a 900g/2lb loaf tin. Cream butter and sugar. Gradually add eggs and flour. Stir in apples and lemon rind. Pour into the tin and sprinkle with sugar and spices. Bake for 1- 1 1/2 hours.

**names have been changed to protect identities*



News Travels

Sitting at the Trench - a reflection

Ann* is just like a labyrinth in which I am lost. Its path mossy and slippery and the high walls overlooking at me. I walk slowly and carefully pretending to know where I am heading. Even though we both know I don't. Ann was a survivor before she was even born. Her eyes open and her heart closed. She doesn't want any pity but she is happy to get to know me. We probably have that in common. That, and the fact that we are both quite innocent. When I first met Ann she was overwhelmed by emotion. Kicking her feet and reaching out with her arms desperately to keep her head above angry waters. I felt supportive and a threat at the same time. Between the good and the bad, walking on egg shells. Breathing in without breathing out. Learning to swim for the first time. After that I knew I would be visiting her again. I would jump in



Patricia Sagasta
Family Support Worker

the water again very soon...so as not to forget my first lesson. I had only walked past the entry sign when I almost understood the purpose of neon lights flashing in the middle of the night in an empty house.

I felt excited and yet didn't know what was waiting in the darkness. I didn't know with my head but I knew with the rest of my body.

Ann needed something and we were both going to try and find out what that something was. We decided to meet up every week and see how things would go. At the beginning every time we met I sat down at the edge of the couch and prepared myself to leave before we had finished.

We would go up and down and around and up again on an emotional rollercoaster. We would start with the 'I'm not ok' and that warned me of everything that was about to come after that. Anger,

sadness, madness, happiness and all the rest. Ann seems to be battling against the whole world most of the time and that includes me sometimes. The world and everyone living in it is the enemy but she is her enemy number one.

I have found myself sitting down more comfortably on her couch lately. I have developed some kind of tolerance to the darkness, the neon lights and the emotional rollercoaster.

Ann continues talking to me and I wonder if I have become a friendlier face that remains lost in the labyrinth. And if so, I just hope that we are a step closer to loving each other. And if not, well, we will just go with the flow...sorting out emergencies, preparing for the enemy and taking care of ourselves as best as we can.

**name has been changed to protect identity*

A Special Welcome to Two New Staff



Cristian Popescu and Nora O'Connor, the two new Social Workers in Exchange House

The Family Support Team saw the departure of two social workers in 2010, Martina McGovern and Aoife O'Brien. Both Martina and Aoife joined Exchange House in 2007 and their invaluable contribution to the organisation is highly appreciated. Their strong work ethic and dedication will be missed. All at Exchange House wish Martina and Aoife the very best of luck in their future endeavours.

It is with great pleasure that Exchange House welcomes Cristian Popescu and Nora O'Connor to the organisation. Cristian hails from Timisoara, Romania, and Nora from Dalkey, Co. Dublin. They are bringing to Exchange House a wealth of experience in homelessness, substance misuse, children and families, elder abuse, mental health and domestic violence. All at Exchange House congratulates Cristian and Nora on their appointments and new roles.

A day in the life of a ... Social Worker



Cristian Popescu
Social Worker

On the 17th January 2011 I walked through the yellow doors of Exchange House to join the staff as a social worker. I was excited knowing I was entering a new phase of my professional life. At the same breath, I was anxious and apprehensive as this was a completely new area for me. My anxiety was lessened as the staff reached out to welcome me and the induction eased me into the ethos of Exchange House, the Traveller community, as well as the resources being accessed in the line of duty. This helped to ensure a smooth transition into my role.

I have previously worked in diverse settings with some of the most marginalised and socially excluded people in society. Working as a social worker in Exchange House is different from any settings I have been exposed to before. The Family Support Team consists of social workers, addiction workers and family support workers and it is a setting that describes the intricacies, variety and uniqueness that distinguishes this frontline Traveller service. Most of the cases are being co-worked within the family support team. What I also found very helpful is that the team is mindful in linking service users to the other departments within Exchange House (Education and Youth Services) thus providing a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary response to the clients accessing the service.

Since starting work at Exchange House no two days has been the same. Here I am just giving a glimpse of how a typical day may look like.

08:30

On this Monday morning I got to the office, grabbed a cup of coffee, checked and responded to my emails, updated my case notes and made a few phone calls. There was a referral that came in on Friday regarding a child protection case which required urgent attention.

09:05

I rang the HSE Social worker who referred the case to get a better picture of what the issues were. She gave an overview of the family and issues of concern. I then decided to do a home visit later that morning.

09:30

Attended the departmental team meeting until 10:30. We normally hold the meetings on Wednesday but this week it was scheduled for Monday as a number of people on the team were attending a workshop on Wednesday.

10:45

Responded to the referral, I attempted to contact the couple but could not get through on their mobile so I went to do a home visit.

11:30

Arrived in Dun Laoghaire. I circled around the place a few times as there was no number on the door and the street was not placed on the map. Eventually I managed to find the residence with the help of an elderly man. I knocked not really knowing what to expect. I was greeted at the door by a man who was intimidating and smelled of alcohol. I introduced myself, explained my role and he invited me into the house. We went to the sitting room where the man's partner and their four year old child were. The woman was lying on the couch and appeared to be very tired. I asked her if she was ok and she said she has been feeling down. She said she was told at the hospital that she was experiencing post natal depression. This led me to believe that she also has a new born baby. After explaining my role and purpose of the visit, I opened the conversation and encouraged the couple to be forthright about issues they might want support with. From the discussion and my observation I noted that the couple will need intensive support and multi disciplinary involvement. The house was in a state of disrepair and it was a health and safety concern.

Various and complex issues were identified namely: child protection concerns, neglect, personal hygiene, domestic violence, addiction issues,

accommodation, mental health and lack of stimulation for the children. Together with the couple we prioritised issues according to their importance. I highlighted to them the importance of getting other services involved so that they can get all the support they needed. They were reluctant to engage with other services stating that they did not trust anyone but I explained that I would be there and advocate on their behalf. After pointing out the importance of this and assuring them that they will be kept informed on all decisions made they agreed. It was then decided that I would first contact the County Council in relation to the repairs, then link Mark* with Exchange House' addiction counsellor, organise a crèche for their four year old daughter and get the case allocated to a family support worker. We agreed that I would do a home visit again on Thursday.

12:35

Finished the home visit and left the house. Grabbed a sandwich and headed back to the office.

13:40

On my arrival at the office I had two clients waiting to see me. I attended to the first client who was in crisis and needed emergency accommodation. I rang the Homeless Person Unit to secure an emergency accommodation and contacted the welfare office to advocate for the client's social welfare payments. Accommodation was secured at a B&B in Dublin 7.

The second client was escaping domestic violence. She asked me to phone the refuge so as to secure a place for her and the children. Rang Coolock refuge and they had a place. She said her two children were in school and asked that I accompany her to collect them and then take them to the refuge.

14:50

Went with the client to collect her children from school and then headed for the refuge.

*name has been changed to protect identity

(continued on page 8)

News Travels

16:20

Arrived back at Exchange House to prepare for a professional meeting.

16:30

Professional meeting at Exchange House until 17:15. After the meeting I went to my desk to write case notes and letters.

18:00

I was doing Alcoholics Anonymous Duty whereby I had to let people who came for the meeting into the building and then lock up afterwards. Meeting finished at 19hrs.

Working for Exchange House and being involved in frontline service provision has given me hands on experience regarding the issues that affect Travellers including: education, accommodation, direct or indirect discrimination, health, social exclusion, equality of access to services and domestic violence. Working within the Family Support Team gives me an opportunity to assist families identify their strengths thus empowering them to improve situations they might be confronted with.

A lot of my work revolves around outreach. This includes prison visits, HSE offices, hospitals, schools, community based organisations and home visits.

I am privileged to be a staff member at Exchange House and look forward to what the future holds.

Education Department

A Visit to the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland



Cathleen McDonagh
Clark
Education Service
Team Leader

Exchange House Education Services is delivering a programme which is exploring cultural concepts in a local, national and global context. The group taking part in the programme is made up of the learners from the Exchange House FÁS LTI and CE schemes. The age range of the group is from 18 to 50+. The group expressed an interest in learning more about the Islamic culture and traditions. We contacted the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland to see if we could go and visit. The centre responded and told us we would be very welcome. A group of learners, kindly transported by the Youth Service, went on a visit to the **Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI)** which is a complex, including a Mosque, in Clonskeagh, Dublin. The Mosque and cultural centre include a main prayer hall, a restaurant, a library, meeting rooms, laundry facilities, ten apartments,

administrative offices and most recently a shop. A primary school is also located on the premises.

Mr. Ali Selim was our host and he made us very welcome. He gave us a tour of the centre and told us some very interesting facts about the Islamic culture/religion. It was very interesting to hear about the beliefs, customs and practice of the Islamic people.

We were intrigued to discover that the core values of Travellers, for example, family, marriage and faith are also cornerstones of the Islamic tradition. It was apparent that among Islamic people faith and their everyday lives are inextricably entwined which is also the practice within the Traveller community. We went into the Mosque and it was nice to sit in this sacred space and listen to our guide explain the different aspects of the Islamic religious beliefs. We learned of the three main shrines and the stories behind them. We had a very enjoyable visit to the centre which left us with a better understanding of the Islamic Culture.

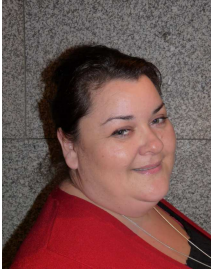
*'Every day's a perfect gift
of time for us to use.
Hours waiting to be filled
in any way we choose.
Each morning brings a
quiet hope that rises with
the sun. Each evening
brings the sweet content
that comes with work well
done.'*

Unknown



The Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland

Educational Visit to Newgrange



Paula Cullen
FAS CE Scheme
Supervisor

A group of the learners in Exchange House are taking part in an Art History and Appreciation class. The group started with pre-Christian Art and are currently studying the Italian Renaissance. Several trips are planned

starting with Newgrange and will include trips to the High Crosses in Collins Barracks, the Gold House in The National Museum and The Book of Kells in Trinity College in the near future so expect updates in the forthcoming



[from left to right] Mary McCarthy, Teresa Cawley, Martin Green, Caoimhe Kerins (FAS LTI Coordinator) and Theresa McDonnell visit the historic site of Newgrange

editions of *News Travels*.

It was a beautiful spring day when the Exchange House Art History group took a trip to Newgrange on Tuesday 15th of March. The group had been studying pre-Christian Irish art for a number of weeks before the trip and were looking forward to seeing the monument which pre-dates the pyramids of Giza and is recognised as one of the oldest roofed structures in the world.

We had been reading about the stones being moved from Wicklow to the site in Meath but only when we saw the structure in reality that we realised what a mammoth task this would have been.

It was the ancient stone carving that held the attention of the group



Martin Green and Caoimhe Kerins emerge from the entrance to the Newgrange tomb

though. The stone at the main entrance had the triple spiral pattern that is unique to Newgrange and that motif is carried on in the chamber itself. Martin was particularly interested in the different materials used to different effect in the building of the monument. The Youth Service very kindly provided Transport (thanks Jimmy!!) and the group thoroughly enjoyed their experience.

One warm day in the month of May
The trees blowing with the soft breeze
The ocean calm and still
With the sun shining upon it
The sand between my feet lovely and warm.

Staring at the children on the beach
Sounds of laughter as they played together
My mind wandering to that place
When I was once like them
Oh, how the years go by
Time waits for no-one.

Staring up into the sky
The sun reflecting upon my face
My mind still wandering to my childhood
How happy it was,
How happy I am to be in this place.

Winnie Joyce 2011
Exchange House FAS LTI Learner

News Travels

Compass - Collaboration with EU Partners on Life Long Learning Project



Caoimhe Kerins
FÁS LTI Programme
Coordinator

COMPASS

Pathways to career management skills

Exchange House National Travellers Service is delighted to be once again the Irish organisation to work in partnership with five other organisations across Europe on *Compass, a Leonardo de Vinci Education and Culture* EU project. The partner organisations for Compass are from Austria, Germany, Greece, Slovakia and Turkey.

Exchange House, as part of The Compass project will work with disadvantaged Traveller youth, national training agencies, educational institutes, employers organisations and career guidance experts to design and implement an innovative

training programme which will create educational and employment options for the youth involved. Exchange House is currently in the process of recruiting young people to engage in this project.

As part of the first stage of Compass Exchange House has recently completed a research project and will publish a report on the current situation for Traveller youth who want to enter further education or the labour market. The information gained from this report will identify gaps in terms of training, education and skills informing the content and structures of the training programme. The Compass project will take place over 2011 and 2012.

STOP PRESS...

Calling all young people aged between 18 & 25 yrs. Are you looking for something different? If so, we are looking for people to take part in this unique project. If you are interested please contact Caoimhe Kerins or Sarah Byrne at Exchange House.

STOP PRESS...2

Are you an employer who is interested in providing a young person with opportunities to learn more about your organisation/ place of work? Do you wish to make a difference in a young person's life? If so please contact Caoimhe Kerins or Sarah Byrne.

Hope is the thing with feathers

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the
words
And never stops at all

And sweetest in the gale is heard
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That keeps so many warm

I've heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest sea
Yet never, in extremity
It asked a crumb of me

Margaret Carter R.I.P.



Some of the EU Compass Project partners working feverishly at the kick off meeting in Innsbruck, Austria.

Turkey at the meeting. The kick off meeting focused on the goals of the project and the various tasks were divided amongst the partners and deadlines set for the various tasks over the next two years.

In November 2010, some members of staff from Exchange House, travelled to Innsbruck in Austria for the kick off meeting of the Compass EU partnership project

The kick-off meeting lasted three days. We met all of the other partners from Germany, Slovakia, Austria, Greece and

Innsbruck is a beautiful town set in the heart of the magnificent Austrian Alps.



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

COMPASS

Pathways to career management skills

And despite our intense work schedule of the kick off meeting, we were lucky enough to take in some of the exceptional sites of the city and the surrounding areas.

In April of this year, some other Exchange House staff members travelled to Samsun in Turkey for the second all partner meeting.

Here all five partners as well as spending time reviewing all the work that had been carried out since our last meeting and reiterate the various pieces of work still to



EU Compass Project partners at the second meeting in Samsun, Turkey

be carried out, renewed friendships and ties that had been established at the kick off meeting.

Again much work was done and all partners were very happy with the success of the project up to this point.

The Compass EU Project is also a European cultural exchange and all partners have had the honour to experience some various cultures already – from Alpine dining to Turkish cuisine – and all look forward to the next meeting in Greece in September, although there is a lot of work to be done at home before then!



Sarah Byrne
Youth Worker

A few words from our Director

Welcome to our 8th edition of *News Travels*. Exchange House is committed to promoting positive, principled solutions that enhance the position of the Traveller community within Ireland today. Our mission is to inspire Travellers based on our core principles of social inclusion, equality and respect.

Despite the economic recession Exchange House continues to thrive! As you can see on the front cover – Exchange House National Traveller Service was one of many applicants to the EU Commission's Fundamental Rights & Justice funding programme. We are proud to let you know that we were the only successful Irish organisation selected to lead a 5 country domestic violence project under the Daphne III Programme.

The Daphne III grant is to "Prevent and combat violence against children, young people and women and to protect victims and groups at risk." Exchange House has been providing front line services for over 30 years to address domestic violence issues and we are delighted to receive additional, dedicated resources in this area. This funding will also allow us to provide specialised, and free, domestic violence training for other service providers working with Travellers.

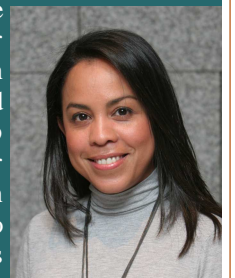
The Family Support Service continues to provide many front line services to Traveller families. There is a high prevalence of substance misuse among clients presenting for support at Exchange House. Our dedicated addiction service has been kept extremely busy addressing the high numbers of clients. We also are seeing a significant increase in clients presenting with mental health issues. The "Sitting at the Trenches" article should give you a small insight into the daily work of trying to address difficult and complex counselling and mental health issues. Family Support also assists parents in addressing more modern issues like making the internet safe for their children.

There is also plenty going on in the Education Services. From art, culture, literacy and religion to career development. Please enjoy the self reflection poem

written by one of our FÁS CE learners which lets you into her educational journey of self discovery. The Insight into Islamic Culture trip organised by the Education Service for FÁS CE and LTI participants uncovered similarities and core values between Travellers and Muslims. There was also a trip to Newgrange as part of the art appreciation class. Exchange House, as part of the Compass EU Project, will work with disadvantaged Traveller youth, national training agencies, educational institutes, employers organisations and career guidance experts to design and implement an innovative training programme which will create educational and employment options for the youth involved.

Youth Services has been busy with both Homework and After Schools Programmes and their core youth work. Be sure to read the article on "Afterschool Kids' Opinions" where you can hear young Travellers' experience of Exchange House's afterschool programme. As part of the Education Away Programme, Youth Services took a group of young Travellers to France; why not read the article about their French adventure. The Education away trips aim to educate those we feel to be most at risk of anti-social behaviour, early school leaving and difficulties in accessing mainstream services. Make sure to read the article about the girls from Ballymun and Clondalkin who got to meet their hero Minister Mary Harney while they showcased their beautiful hats.

I would like to thank the staff of Exchange House for their hard work and dedication. Our caseload is not just larger, with the number of clients presenting to Exchange House having increased by 35%, but the cases presenting are also becoming ever more complex. Though it is very hard sometimes to keep spirits up they never cease to amaze me in their commitment to the Traveller families we serve.



Heydi Foster
Director

News Travels

Youth in Action - Catch the Spirit



[from left to right] John Paul Collins (Exchange House Youth Worker), Martin Reilly, Martin McDonagh, Thomas Stokes, John Collins (Exchange House/FÁS CE Scheme Learner) and Louise Stokes (Exchange House/FÁS CE Scheme Learner) with their EU Youth Pass certificates to show that learning has taken place in the area of communications, interactions with different cultures and environments, problem solving and conflict resolution, planning, organising, managing and team work.

Exchange House National Travellers Service was selected as a partner in an EU Youth Exchange Project "Catch the Spirit". We are a group of five young Travellers from Exchange House, some working on the FÁS Community Employment scheme and some participating in the Youth Service.

We made a DVD, working during the summer of 2010. Last August in Innsbruck we met fifteen other young people, from the other three partner organisations from Austria, Germany and Slovakia. During that week the raw material from all of the partner countries was edited and put together into a documentary film

social workers, addiction workers and community leaders.

In addition to making the film, the week spent in Austria, working with other young people from across Europe was a great learning experience for us all and we earned Youth Pass certificates which will

that will be used as a training tool in youth, community and educational settings.

The theme of the DVD is Poverty and Social Exclusion and a wide range of people were interviewed including politicians, our peers, older Travellers, non-Traveller people,



Education and Culture DG

'Youth in Action' Programme

enhance our progression options in the future.

As Travellers remain one of the most marginalised groups in Ireland, experiencing high levels of poverty and social exclusion, we endeavoured to make an interesting and insightful film. We feel we achieved this and would like to once again take the opportunity to thank all of the people who contributed to the making of our film.

We launched our DVD on May 4th 2011 in Exchange House. We also received our EU Youth Pass certificates to show that learning has taken place in the area of communications, interactions with different cultures and environments,



Martin Reilly receives his EU Youth Pass from William McDonagh (Youth Service Team Leader)



Guests watch the DVD at the launch on 4th May

problem solving and conflict resolution, planning, organising, managing and team work.

Copies of the DVD are available from Exchange House National Travellers Service on request.

Traveller Youth Service

Education Away Trip - France 2011

Exchange House Youth Service run a number of Educational Away Programmes throughout the year. The aim of these programmes is to educate those we feel to be most at risk of anti-social behaviour, early school leaving and those who do not access mainstream services due to family circumstances. We identify and engage with these young people on an educational level in a positive informal setting. We aim to build up relationships with these young people and work on social and communication skills. This year's programme involved two trips, one in Ireland and one in France. We asked one of our young people to talk about his experience of his trip to France.



James Joyce, aged 12

My name is James Joyce and I want to tell you about my education away trip to Normandy, France. There were eight young people and four youth workers.

We got the Oscar Wilde ship to France, from Rosslare to Cherbourg. Some of us were never on a ship that big before, and one of the lads asked if we would be parking the bus on roof of the ship!!! The crossing took 19 hours but we passed the time playing video games, watching films and sleeping.

On our first day in France we visited Saint Malo where we met with French Travellers and attended a lovely mass in a local chapel. Afterwards we had a lovely barbeque which the group put on for us. Our group then went to a site where the French Travellers lived; they had caravans and the same site layout as here in Dublin. It is custom

for French Travellers to get married. They keep game fowl birds like in Ballymun and they have hawks as pets to. The French Travellers were almost the same as home just the language and some of the food was different.

We also went to Mont St Michel where monks used to live and was built in honour of St Michael the ark angel. The mount is a rock with

a very small town on it. At one time the mount was only available by boat. We walked right around the mount and it took us 30 minutes. There were very steep stairs and very small alleyways in the town because of the lack of space on the rock.

Whilst we were away we celebrated Martin's 15th birthday. We celebrated his birthday with hotdogs and a birthday cake. My favourite day was the day we visited Paris, we went to Disneyland, Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower. We spent a day in Disneyland going on different attractions and seen all the Disney

characters we also had lovely food there. We then visited the Arc de Triomphe which is one of the most famous monuments in Paris and we learnt that a lot of historical people including Napoleon's ashes had passed through. We then visited the Eiffel Tower at night time so the Tower was lit up and looked great; we caught the light display that only happens every hour where the Eiffel Tower flickers and looks like a Christmas display!! This was my favourite day we also had loads of food, I was very tired that night.

On the 5th day we went to see the war memorials in Normandy we visited an American cemetery, a German cemetery and a U.K cemetery I found this very interesting. We also went to a chapel Sainte-Mère-Église where the American paratrooper got tangled in the cross at the top of the chapel. He didn't die but hung there pretending to be until the Germans took him prisoner, I really liked this story.

The whole trip was a great adventure and I loved seeing how French Travellers live. I also learnt that they face the same prejudice as we do in Ireland. It makes you think that somehow we could build better links and combat this together.



[from left to right] James Joyce, Patrick McDonagh, Martin Reilly, Michael Stokes, Martin McDonagh, Michael Collins, Michael Collins and Michael McDonagh



Meeting French Roma young people at their parish centre to share experiences and have some fun.

News Travels

Afterschool Kids' Opinions

St. Oliver's and Bridgeview after-schools have been running as a part of Exchange House youth service for the past 9 years. The aim of our after-schools is to offer educational and homework support to the young people living on this site that are in primary or secondary education. Julie, our co-ordinator, and her three staff members Annmarie, Kate and Ciara offer 20 young people a range of different activities alongside their homework support. They do off site trips, computers, arts and crafts, historical and educational trips i.e. museums, outdoor adventure, gardening, musical instrument lessons and a summer project each year. And here are some of the reviews from our biggest critics!!!!

Hi, my name is Julie Power and I'm 8 and I will be 9 in April. I love the homework club because it's really fun and we do art and fun games. If we are really good they bring us on a trip. Julie McDonagh is the boss and Ciara, Kate, Annmarie and Emma are our helpers. I love coming here everyday because if you get your work done in time we get to play games, that's why I really love going to the homework club.

Julie aged 8

My name is Tommy I go to the homework club everyday. Julie is in charge, Ciara and Emma help us with our homework. Everybody is kind. My best friend in the homework club is Archie. I love doing my homework and everybody is very helpful. We do art and go on trips. If you are good at the end of the day you get a treat.

Tommy aged 7

My name is Archie. I live near the homework club. I have been in the homework club for a couple of years. I do my homework, art and get something to eat. If we are good we get to go on a trip. We get noodles and soup to eat and on treat day something nice. It's nice to be in the homework club, I like going everyday.

Archie aged 8

My name is William. I started coming to the homework club when I was 5 years old. I love coming to the homework club because I get all my homework done before I go home. I like all the things we do in the homework club. I like art and books and karaoke days.

William aged 9

I like the homework club because I do my homework and get to play games. I go to the club with my sister Shania. I like doing art, playing the violin, playing games and getting help with my homework. I like getting our break to we get something nice and if we are good a treat.

John aged 7

My name is Gypsy; I go to the homework club in St Oliver's Park. I like that we do different activities including art, p.e. and karaoke. There is always a helper to help you. The helpers are Ciara, Annmarie, Emma, Sarah and Kate.

Gypsy Aged 8

My name is Julie Mc Donagh and I have been going to the homework club since I was 5. We go on trips and do a lot of activities such as art, P.E. and karaoke. We have a lot of help with our homework and if we are stuck there are lots of teachers to help us. Most of all we get a good education. My favourite day is karaoke and P.E. day. I love the homework club.

Julie aged 11



Afterschool Teacher, Ciara O'Sullivan with some of the students

June 2011

Traveller Pride Week

The aim of the week is to celebrate the contribution Travellers make both within their own communities and to Irish society as a whole, through their culture, enterprise, and sporting excellence, professional expertise across every area and unique history and tradition.

Objectives of Traveller Pride Week:

- To develop Traveller pride in their Irish identity and cultural background
- To develop awareness and promote an understanding of the position of Travellers in Irish society
- To highlight Travellers' contribution to Irish society
- To promote Traveller participation in public life and policy development

Exchange House were involved with the balloon launch, this took place on the 10th December. This was an event that ran nationally; Traveller children launched balloons, carrying a note of their hopes for 2011. The event was very successful and a large group of girls from all our

catchment areas got involved. Whilst it was a cold, wet day the event was very successful with the girls meeting new friends from all over Dublin. They each

received a t-shirt and all launched their balloons with their hopes for 2011. The day was very enjoyable.



The Day I met Mary Harney

After the summer projects we began a project designing our own hats based on anything we wanted.

These were to be used to display at Exchange House's 30 year

anniversary celebrations.

Sarah and Jimmy and Sharon helped us to get ideas from magazines and the internet.

To prepare we went to the Botanic Gardens to gather ideas.

The hats took us 2 and half months to do.

They were all different shapes and sizes. One of them was even a

snail.

The day we were displaying them Sarah picked 5 of us to go to Exchange House to display the hats for all the people coming in.

When we were there we met the Archbishop of Dublin and the Minister for Health Mary Harney.

There was people there from the newspapers and our photograph was in the Metro. There was a mass and people singing and at the end of it we got to cut a cake with Mary Harney.

It was a very exciting day.

Ellen Violet McDonagh, Una McDonagh, Jane Marie McDonagh, Chantelle McDonagh and Nicole McDonagh



Mary Harney with [from left to right] Jane Marie, Nicole, Chantelle, Ellen and Una

News Travels

Exchange House National Educational Achievement

Exchange House is happy to announce the annual
National Educational Achievement Award
will take place on Friday 21st of October 2011 at 5pm.

Nominations are now being accepted,
Please see www.exchangehouse.ie/awardnominationform.php for an online application
form or use the form below and post to our address.

The Award is presented annually to members of the Traveller community who have
recently completed Junior certificate, Leaving Certificate, GCSE's, A Levels and third
level qualifications from National Certificates upwards.

The Awards are open to nominees from all over the island of Ireland.
The awards ceremony highlights and celebrates the academic success in the Traveller
community and will continue to do so.



Nomination

I/We wish to nominate:

Name: (Capital letters please):

Address:

Telephone Number:

Fax number:

Email:

Reference/Exam number:

School/Training or education centre

Leaving Cert Junior Cert Other

Nominated by

Name: (Capital letters please):

Address:

Email:

Organization and Title: (If applicable):

Relationship to the nominee:

Signature: Date:

Please include additional information you think might
be relevant

Office Use Only:

Please return your nomination form to:
Cathleen McDonagh
Exchange House National Travellers Service
61 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1
Ph. 01 872 1094



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