

Foyer nieuwsbrief internationaal (Verzending datum: 08/11/2012)

## **International Foyer Newsletter: Autumn Edition**

Welcome to this autumnal edition of Foyer's international newsletter. Over the past few weeks and months, Foyer employees and volunteers put much effort into the organization of the annual Dialogue Day and its side events. But as usual at Foyer, much, much more was going on...

### **Dialogue Day 2012**

Brussels unlimited: hundreds of people with different backgrounds tell tales of the city

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### **Foyer's Roma and Travellers Service in Kosice, Slovakia**

Grundtvig project promotes teachers' and learners' exchanges on Roma mediation methods

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### **Songlines: If You Go Away**

Jacques Brel translated and multiplied

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### **Dialogue Day 2012**

“Brussels à volonté” was the theme of Foyer’s annual Dialogue Day on 20 October. “À volonté” translates as “at will” or “unlimited”. At various locations across the city, hundreds of people of different backgrounds gathered around a table to discuss, remember and imagine Brussels. At each table, a mediator ensured that the conversation did not turn into a debate and that everyone got to have their say. People who would not normally meet talked about their everyday life in Brussels and shared memories and dreams for the future.

New dialogue locations this year included the rtbf studios (the French-speaking branch of Belgian national TV) and the [Jewish Museum of Belgium](#). With a capoeira demonstration, dance company [Ultima Vez](#) showed how bodies can communicate without words.

The 2012 edition also featured several neighbourhood groups – people who got together to meet and tell their stories, not just on Dialogue Day, but also before and after the actual event. Such local tables promote social cohesion and give people the opportunity to break the boundaries of their own networks. One local group, for example, held a [dialogue picnic](#) in September: in an orchard just outside the city, they sat down on a tablecloth to talk and think about the city and its relation to nature. This dialogue picnic was also part of the 2012 [Sideways Festival](#), a festival about the art of slow walking.

In 2013, the seventh edition of Dialogue Day will see the concept totally revamped. To be continued...

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## **Foyer's Roma and Travellers Service in Kosice, Slovakia**

Foyer's Roma and Travellers Service, which was established in 2007 and has grown ever since, is currently taking part in a Grundtvig (\*) project with partner organizations in Germany (Zentrum für Interkulturellen Dialog), Slovakia (Romski Institut) and Turkey (Edirne Roma Association EDROM).

In Europe, there is an urgent need for good practices for working with Roma communities. Mediation has been recognized as an example of successful practice (Council of Europe – ROMED Programme). Yet mediation work for Roma remains a very complex job. As an intermediary, the mediator has to keep a neutral position between two parties which have very often a problematic relationship: a population which is facing a cluster of social problems, including high risk of exclusion and poverty, and a society with a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Roma population, often resulting in a prejudiced view. Connecting families and schools is a complicated process, in which the mediator has a role to build and reinforce trust between the two parties. Mediators of Roma origin have a considerable advantage since they belong to the Roma community (confidence!) and speak the Romani language. However, their position as a professional can be very precarious when they lack training, coaching and methodology.

This learning partnership is directed towards adult learners from Roma communities who work as school mediators to help integrate Roma communities. The project provides a platform that allows for an exchange of experience and information among Roma school mediators and trainers.

The learning partnership also investigates how the training of mediators can be improved in order to provide quality service for the community and institutions. Another main aim of the project is a better understanding of the relation between migration patterns from Eastern to Western Europe and integration aspects of the Roma community.

This month, the kick-off meeting of the Grundtvig partnership takes place in Kosice, Slovakia. In the course of the project, mutual exchange visits will be organized in each participating country, consisting of demonstrations of mediation practices, workshops on different methods and field visits to various local partners.

*(\*)The Grundtvig programme is part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013). Grundtvig focuses on the teaching and study needs of learners in adult education and lifelong learning and of the organization providing adult education. The programme funds such activities as staff exchanges and the establishment of partnerships between organizations in different European countries.*

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### **Songlines: If You Go Away**

*If you go away on this summer day/ Then you might as well take the sun away/ All the birds that flew in the summer sky/ And our love was new and our hearts were high*

Jacques Brel was a phenomenon. Dozens of artists, from Edith Piaf to Cyndi Lauper, Sting and Placebo, have recorded songs by this singer from Brussels – and new covers continue to be made.

The above lyrics are a snippet from “If You Go Away”, an English version (although by no means a translation!) of “Ne me quitte pas”, one of Brel’s most famous and most frequently translated songs. Versions of Ne me quitte pas exist in English, Dutch, Arabic, Turkish, Finnish, Russian, Swedish, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Czech, Croat, Polish, Hebrew, Portuguese and Afrikaans – to name just a few! The streets of Brussels, too, are teeming with “foreign” languages that have become so much part of the local scene. High time, then, to give Brel back to Brussels – with a twist.

At Foyer, “Het Pakt”, an artists’ collective, recorded versions of Ne me quitte pas by some fifty inhabitants of Brussels with wildly varying backgrounds. They came from China, Uganda, the Netherlands, Macedonia, Mozambique, Bulgaria and many other places. Their voices were recorded separately and then sampled into a virtual multilingual choir.

“I had never heard of Jacques Brel or “Ne me quitte pas” until I had a look around on YouTube and immediately recognized the melody! When I was maybe eight or ten years old I used to hear the English version of this song regularly. My older sister just loved this record. Little did I know that the original was by a singer from Brussels.” *Sareh from Iran*

On 6 October, at the annual nocturnal festival “La Nuit Blanche”, the rue de Villers in central Brussels was the scene for “Songlines” a large-scale poetic installation, with images of the singers projected on clotheslines and the amazing sound of the choir all around. Passers-by and locals could enjoy the spectacle and warm themselves with a bowl of hot soup – so Brussels!

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