

Foyer nieuwsbrief internationaal (Verzending datum: 31/05/2013)

Welcome to Foyer's International Newsletter - Spring 2013

Despite a long, dark and cold winter Foyer kept on moving... This Newsletter reports on some of the projects that we have helped put in motion and current affairs that have moved us...

Bicycle ambassadors in training

Brussels bicycle workshop Cyclo, a cooperative, not-for-profit organization that promotes the use of bicycles as an everyday means of transport in Brussels, has joined hands with Foyer's Youth Work Team for a promising new project.

In previous years, Foyer already offered cycling lessons, including the basics of repair and maintenance, but this year we take it one step further. During a five-month period, five 14- to 16-year-olds are given the opportunity to construct their very own bicycle from scratch - or should we say from scrap? Cyclo staff assist them every Wednesday afternoon at the workshop, and teach them how to turn what looks like a heap of rusty metal into a cool racing bike.

Through this initiative, Cyclo and Foyer want to show local youngsters that a bike can be a fast, effective and cool way to move around in the city – and we want those youngsters to spread the word, becoming “bicycle ambassadors”.

The first results are already there, as Said of the Foyer Training Centre proudly presented his handmade, well-oiled, chromed-out bike. To be continued.

To Syria – and back again?

On 15th May Foyer organized an evening event entitled “Syria and local youth”. A panel of local mayors, academics, and a journalist and seasoned war reporter addressed the crucial question: what drives local youth to Syria, and how should the issue be dealt with? The Belgian Foreign Minister recently described the increasing number of Western fighters who have joined up with Islamist insurgents in Syria as “a problem”. He said that he feared for the return of the survivors: “What state will they be in when they return?”

The debate at Foyer was well-balanced. None of the speakers on the panel tried to convince the others that his or her version of events was the only valid interpretation. Indeed, nobody claimed to have the final answer or the miracle solution in this very complex case.

Destitution, religious fanaticism, peer group pressure and the restless nature of youth all combine into a potentially explosive cocktail.

In a reaction to the event, a member of the audience wrote: “A society not only has every interest in recycling its rubbish, it should also be careful not to create and accumulate “human waste”; the 500 youngsters who go from Europe to Syria are but the tip of a volcano. We should not ignore that tip, but we should deal with the volcano as a whole, and try to burn it in a controlled way, as it were. That is the constructive work that Foyer and similar organizations have to sign up for.”

Reporter Rudi Vranckx considered the role of the media, admitting that they are to a certain extent an accomplice in this case. On the other hand, however, he pointed out that this is less a story of crime and guilt than a case of human drama and that it should be treated as such. Therefore, it is all the more important that we try and work with those who come back.

Libraries go multilingual

In December 2012 Foyer embarked on a new project with 6 libraries in Brussels. A full-year program was outlined aiming at interculturalising staff, activities and books supply.

Apart from intercultural reflection sessions for staff, multilingual game workshops were organized for the youngest visitors of the libraries as well as workshops on intercultural books for children and their parents and on reading stories in different languages.

During the last workshop the same story was read in a playful and interactive way in Dutch, French and Berber. All of the attending children spoke at least one of these languages. They sang along, did some motor skills activities and created pieces of art from what they saw in the book. They were very enthusiastic and language never seemed to be an impediment. On the contrary, the language diversity proved to be a surplus value.

The library project will be expanded to other libraries in Brussels next year.

Badge your respect

Train guards removing ragging armed youngsters, train guards beaten up by a group of fare dodgers, ... 'Faits divers' you can read in the media on a regular basis. Last year, after a bus hit a car, a bus guard was summoned to report on the accident and take pictures. He was beaten to death on the spot... It's high time to halt aggression against public transport staff!

Therefore the Brussels Transport Company MIVB organized the 'days of respect' from 8 till 10th of April. 100.000 'Respect for all' badges were distributed at the most important stops and stations. It's utterly important to show respect and to stand up for it. One of the busses was completely decorated within the theme and testimonies of customers and staff were spread through social media. Customers could take pictures of themselves with their badges and post them on the MIVB Facebook site.

Hopefully such dreadful things will never happen again.