The Youth Community of Practice (YCoP) global listserv links professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to effective youth development ideas, information and best practices to help:

*Design more effective, sustainable youth programs, and
*Better integrate youth participation in USAID development projects

In this Links: Youth Professional Development in Eastern Europe: Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, youth in Eastern Europe are struggling to employ their skills and creativity in a bigger, more uncertain, and increasingly competitive labor market. Youth unemployment in particular has increased as a result of the global financial crisis, which caused a double digit increase in youth unemployment in all but three EU countries in 2009. If left unaddressed, high levels of youth unemployment in this region may lead to apathy among youth, social unrest, risky personal behaviors, and a lagging economy. While the challenge presented by unemployment among youth in Eastern Europe is daunting, projects and initiatives are currently being implemented to give youth the tools they need to succeed in a more integrated regional and global economy.

Announcements:

International Year of Youth: August 12, 2010 – August 11, 2011
http://social.un.org/youthyear/
Under the theme of “Dialogue and Mutual Understanding,” the International Year of Youth will begin this coming August. The International Year of Youth “aims to encourage dialogue and understanding across generations and promote the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and freedoms, and solidarity.” Governments, civil society organizations, communities, and individuals are encouraged to mark the occasion. Events in fifteen priority areas identified under the World Program of Action for Youth (WPAY) will take place in locations across the globe.

Launch of European Parliament Intergroup on Youth
http://www.youthforum.org/en/node/1944
The first ever meeting of the newly created Intergroup on Youth took place during the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, on February 11, 2010. This newly created body within the European Union (EU) gathers a diverse group of twenty members of the European Parliament to discuss issues such as youth employment, mobility, and active citizenship. The creation of the Intergroup follows a written declaration from the European Parliament in 2008 pledging more attention to youth empowerment in EU policies. The Youth Forum will follow the policy decisions taken by the EU towards youth, and will evaluate developments on the forum website.
Projects and Initiatives:

Budapest Youth Enterprise Center (BYEC), Budapest, Hungary
Since BYEC became operational in 1999, the Center has offered young people interested in starting their own businesses a comprehensive program of support from training to enterprise counseling to office space. In what Enterprise Development Worldwide (the implementing organization) calls “incubator cells,” young entrepreneurs can obtain office space and a wide array of resources for a period of up to two years, during which prices for offices and other resources gradually move to market levels. BYEC focuses on target groups such as the unemployed, those with disabilities, and minorities. Operating under the youngbusiness3 program funded by the EU’s Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Programme, BYEC is just one of many programs underway in Eastern Europe designed to foster microenterprise and a culture of entrepreneurship among the region’s youth.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs
http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/
Initiated by the European Union, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs helps aspiring young entrepreneurs develop relevant skills for starting and managing a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) by spending time with a business professional in another EU country. In addition to giving on-the-job training to young entrepreneurs in different countries, the program also facilitates exchanges of experience and information between established and aspiring entrepreneurs, enhances market access, and provides opportunities for identifying potential business partners. Financed by the European Commission, the program is operational in 24 countries and is open to youth who have either started or are interested in starting their own SMEs. The website above provides a User’s Guide in three languages, success stories, and information on how youth and managers of SMEs can apply to participate in the program.

Youth Employability and Retention Program, Bosnia and Herzegovina
http://www.mdgfund.org/program/bihyouthemployabilityandretentionprogramme
The youth unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina is nearly 60%, and is the highest in southeastern Europe. As European integration proceeds, chances for migration both within and between countries in Europe have increased, presenting youth with opportunities for employment that were previously unavailable. Managed by the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F), the Youth, Employability and Retention project works with governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations to improve the employability of a targeted 13,000 young men and women through life skills and career development training. The program will also provide support to would-be migrants and an opportunity for returning youth to retrain and reintegrate into the local labor market using skills gained while abroad. The MDG-F is currently implementing more than a dozen similar projects across the globe as part of the Youth, Employment and Migration Initiative.

Oracle Innovate Program, Bucharest, Romania
http://www.oracle.com/corporate/europeanunion/articles/innovate-launch.html
The Innovate program, which will expand to the Czech Republic and Turkey in October of 2010, was inaugurated in February, 2010 in Bucharest, Romania. Created by the IT company Oracle, the Innovate program seeks to identify and encourage technology-based business ideas conceived by IT graduates. At the launch of the program, Oracle emphasized that the synthesis of youth, technology and entrepreneurship in the Innovate program will allow youth to contribute to the economy, create jobs and build a better future for themselves and their country. Qualifying participants will receive business advice and access to funding and
technical resources, allowing youth to concentrate on developing and promoting their products.

Resources for Practitioners:

Youth Policy Watch
http://www.youthforum.org/en/node/2022
The Youth Policy Watch is a bi-weekly bulletin that aims to deliver the latest news pertaining to education, human rights, employment and social affairs, youth work development and participation, and youth policy mainstreaming in the European Union. Available in both English and French, the bulletin is intended for those interested in youth development in the region. Topics in the latest edition include increasing cooperation between youth organizations and EU governing institutions, critical discussion of the EU's 2020 Strategy, and new employment initiatives for European youth.

Young People in South Eastern Europe: From Risk to Empowerment
http://go.worldbank.org/G9TG36Y0T0
Youth who have come of age in the period of transition from a closed to an open economy in South Eastern Europe have faced many challenges as they move toward adulthood. In this study, the World Bank finds that unemployment has contributed to risky behaviors among youth, such as unsafe sex, substance abuse, and involvement in crime. In order to avoid these and other problems caused or made worse by high levels of unemployment, the World Bank provides a roadmap for youth development in the region, stressing that an integrated approach must be taken that incorporates social, economic, and political participation of young people in society. In particular, the report stresses that school and work programs should be integrated to smooth the entry of youth into the labor force.

Youth Entrepreneurship and Local Development in Central and Eastern Europe
Published in 2008, this book from Paul Blokker and Bruno Dallago analyses the opportunities and obstacles for youth entrepreneurship in Central and Eastern Europe. Taking a critical examination of the excitement over youth entrepreneurship in the region, the authors point out that excessive optimism may cause practitioners to overlook major pitfalls to increasing opportunities for youth in the region. By providing numerous case studies on youth entrepreneurs in Eastern Europe, this book can serve as a valuable resource to those seeking to promote youth entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe.

European Youth Portal
http://europa.eu/youth/enews.cfm?l_id=EN&CFID=14273837&CFTOKEN=2755efa3ef12ba05-49D6E723-BBB5-2422-B4E4F9168F4F12C6&isessionid=4207fb81366f2677113eTR
This European Youth Portal, managed by the European Commission, offers information on eight different topic areas in 25 different languages to the youth of the EU. News, information about ongoing initiatives and projects, student exchanges, and employment opportunities are some of the many areas covered by the website.

Looking for YOUR input: We would like to hear from you! YCoP welcomes ideas, resources, and best practices on effective youth programs and youth participation. We would also like to encourage nominations of other youth practitioners or youth leaders to participate in the YCoP Links listserv. Hit “reply” to send information and feedback to YCoP Links.
To unsubscribe from the list, users should send an e-mail to listserv@info.usaid.gov with only “unsubscribe youthcop” in the body of the e-mail. (No signatures please).

Mission of YCoP: The Youth Community of Practice provides a forum for professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to gather, consolidate, archive, disseminate and exchange information, knowledge, ideas and best practices, particularly related to the incorporation of youth participation in USAID development projects. The Youth Community of Practice is an informal body of volunteer members, reached through a global list serve and Washington-based chapter. Both the list serve and DC chapter forums include USAID staff, youth practitioners outside of the Agency, and youth themselves. It is jointly sponsored by the office of education in the bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT) at USAID and the Education Quality Improvement Program3 (EQUIP3), and implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in the materials provided through YCoP Links or posted by listserv participants is not official U.S. Government information and does not necessarily represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Government or EQUIP3. For a copy of the guidelines and/or charter, put the request in the subject line of the email and send to youthcop@lists.info.usaid.gov. Participants should be aware that the list is public and not private communication. When participants voluntarily disclose personal information on a list serve, that information can be collected and used by others and may result in unsolicited messages from other people.