



Methodology Annex: Working with young homeless people as co-researchers

WPX - June 2010

Joan Smith, UK, on behalf of CSEYHP national teams

This report is one of the deliverables of the CSEYHP project: Combating social exclusion among young homeless populations: a comparative investigation of homeless paths among local white, local ethnic groups and migrant young men and women, and appropriate reinsertion methods. The project is funded by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities theme.



Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Peer research and co-researchers	3
1.2 Reported experiences of working with peer researchers/ co-researchers	4
1.3 The CSEYHP approach to working with co-researchers	6
2. Recruiting and Training the Co-Researcher teams	7
2.1 Different methods of recruitment	7
2.2 Composition of the research teams	7
2.3 Training teams	7
2.4 Training programmes	8
2.5 Accreditation of the research skills of the co-researchers	9
2.6 Training on the questionnaire, piloting the questionnaire and discussions on the questionnaire with the co-researcher teams	10
2.7 Training in ethics	12
3. Fieldwork	14
3.1 Organising the fieldwork	14
3.2 Fieldwork in unfamiliar settings	14
3.3 Support and Safety during Fieldwork	15
3.4 Experience of using the questionnaire in the field	16
4. Co-researchers assessment of their work and their impact on the project	17
5. Advantages of working with co-researchers	19
6. Disadvantages of working with co-researchers	21
7. Recommendations	23
References	25

1. Introduction

In this Annex we report the experiences of the CSEYHP project of working with young homeless co-researchers in four countries. We report on the difficulties of implementing these principles in relation to a four country research study and additional good practice points; the assessment of the experience from the perspective of the co-researchers themselves; and the advantages and disadvantages of working with co-researchers to research youth homelessness.

1.1 Peer research and co-researchers

In the UK it is becoming common to employ people who have experience of a particular disadvantage to work as co-researchers on research projects. Therefore, there is a UK literature discussing the issues of working with older and younger people as co-researchers and also of researching with the involvement of children. This is not such a common practice elsewhere in Europe, as the interest shown by Dutch television in filming our co-researchers demonstrates.

The movement for service users as co-researchers or peer researchers developed in the UK through separate but linked processes. High levels of homelessness, including street homeless people, in the early 1990s led to 'Speak Out' movements demanding improved homeless and health services which in turn led to services developing user focus groups and commissioning surveys to advise on services.

This commissioning process led to the development of specialist agencies in the homelessness sector to train homeless people as co-researchers or self-employed consultants, working on service assessment or as interviewers on local authority surveys and leaders of focus groups. Currently there are two agencies in London and one in Birmingham offering this training. The Groundswell organisation in South London enables homeless people's self-help and service user groups to be involved in creating practical solutions to their problems, and to contact and learn from each other through a directory. Groundswell also organises peer led research and helps achieve grant funding for user-led projects. It provides consultancy for organisations and training in client involvement. It campaigns to promote the voices of people experiencing homelessness. B-Hug in North London has similar aims of giving a voice to homeless people, organising their participation in research projects, and offering opportunities to homeless people that build their capacity and realise their potential. B-Hug has also been involved in awareness of homelessness and prevention projects, particularly in the field of youth homelessness through running 'road shows' in local communities explaining the risks of homelessness.

These developments were encouraged by government support for St Basils, Birmingham, to establish a National Youth Reference Group. The National Youth Reference Group of homeless and ex-homeless young people is hosted by the St Basil project, Birmingham on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government. This project had one year government funding to develop a group of young people across England to advise local authorities and agencies on youth involvement in the running of homeless charities (www.nationalyouthreferencegroup.co.uk).

Parallel to the use of service users as advisors on the development of services was the development of service user involvement in research projects. This development

was particularly encouraged by research commissioned by charitable trusts beginning with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (www.jrf.org). Originally called peer research, the first evaluations of the use of these methods were in late 1990s. This has now become an accepted methodology for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) that funds university based social science research.

In **the Netherlands** co-researching is less widespread than in the UK, although there was one good example of co-researching by homeless youth reported in the early nineties (Noom & De Winter, 2001). Nonetheless, organisations involved in working with homeless youth are aware of the need to involve homeless youth in initiatives concerning them. Three main routes of involvement can be distinguished: developing (potential) capacities among young co-researchers, utilising their expert knowledge of the situation of young homeless people and encouraging other young people to participate in the project. To find co-researchers for the CSEYHP project the Dutch team worked together with Projektenburo, an organisation well-known for working together with homeless youth. In their project Young Voices U-2B HEARD, young homeless are involved in testing and improving social services after they have been trained in interviewing and negotiating.

In PAJA, Participation Audit Young Amsterdam, young homeless or former young homeless visit social services and make proposals for improvement. After four months the same team will visit the service again. In this process they are supported by the Projektenburo and the research institute Verwey-Jonker. Other organisations like Stichting Zwerfjongeren Nederland are more and more involved in opening up to homeless youth themselves. Some homeless youth self-organisations are also developing; these are mainly in the four big cities -The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam.

In Portugal, the key strategic plan for inclusion (NAPIncl 2006-2008) included the active involvement of clients for the design of the projects developed for them as a privileged guideline. The first good practice experiences of projects developed with client involvement are being reported. There are local project initiatives that use the peer experience of youth in situations of exclusion that can present a role-model for other youth. One example is the experience of the cultural NGO "Moinho da Juventude" , which follows the experience of a Belgian organisation "De Link", by working with peer mentors in order to promote their empowerment and resilience (Godelieve Meersschaert). However, the involvement of clients in undertaking research is still untried. In the **Czech Republic** the involvement of clients was also seen as an innovative method.

1.2 Reported experiences of working with peer researchers/ co-researchers

The literature on peer research (co-research) discusses several major issues to be taken into account including: recruitment, training, fieldwork, and post fieldwork contact. In the late 1990s the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a series of studies reporting on young people's involvement in the research process including Jenny Morris on working to involve disabled children and young people and Perpetua Kirby (1994; 2004) on involving young people in research.

Kirby (1999) interviewed researchers undertaking 20 studies involving young people as participatory researchers. They reported to her that the involvement of young people led to better research, participation and personal development for the young

person. In particular she reported that young people can achieve a high standard of research, with rigorous quality controls, and have access to other young people. Their insider knowledge can bring validity to the research findings but also be strongly emotionally involved with the subject, causing tensions. One drawback is that some respondents prefer to talk to older interviewers rather than their peers, particularly about sensitive topics. Based on the experience of these 20 studies Kirby reported that realistic planning is required in order that young people can be included in the setting of aims and objectives, in designing research tools, conducting fieldwork (with alternative methods of recording to note taking) and analysing and reporting. Some of the problems she identified also relate to our experience in CSEYHP: young people having a lack of skills which leads to the collection of unusable data, finding difficulties with handling sensitive information that is disclosed to them, or not understanding issues of consent or the importance of conducting research with proper safety procedures for themselves.

In 2002 the SOVA led project on Women into Work published a good practice guide based on their experience of using ex-offenders as peer researchers. The main points of good practice from their experience are:

- Full use should be made of the expertise of peer researchers, including in the initial research design and appropriate question wording, through to analysis and writing up.
- Academic researchers should understand their role as a facilitating one.
- In 'closed' institutions such as prisons a protocol between the institutions and the research team is required.
- Groundwork is required in the first stages of the project in order to cultivate relationships with staff of institutions.
- Participation in the project must be voluntary and not because someone in authority has instructed a co-researcher to participate.
- The post of peer researcher should be widely advertised.
- Peer researchers should be asked to keep a detailed diary of their experiences to assess whether the experience is empowering.

SOVA produced a series of leaflets on *Peer Research Training and Influencing Policy and Practice*. SOVA and 10 other agencies secured funding from the ESF for its women into work projects based in women's prisons in England, and reported further on the use of peer research in this programme in 2004 and the outcomes of its research in 2005.

SOVA's work summarises the advantages and disadvantages of using peer researchers. Benefits of peer research include: peers' knowledge of the research areas can assist in research design, assistance with the recruitment of research participants, multiple functions in interview situations, relaxed interviews, peer researchers as positive role models for interviewees, and the development of new skills and knowledge through training opportunities among the peer researchers themselves. Problems with peer research include: it is time consuming and expensive, peer researchers may ask questions in a 'leading' manner owing to their own experience, and peer researchers' own difficult lives may lead to them dropping out of the research project. For the SOVA project there were particular issues around using women prisoners as peer researchers that did not apply to the CSEYHP project.

A contradictory element in SOVA's good practice guide is the advice on managing the role of peer researchers. The good practice guide requires that both roles and expectations of peer researchers be established from the outset but also that peer

researchers should be able to define themselves and their role within the project. The SOVA discussion on ethical dilemmas and the requirement for support systems are also somewhat limited and we have expanded on these issues in this report.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded a series of four linked seminars about user involvement in research attended by 147 people which focussed on: traditional or mainstream research, peer review, black and minority ethnic communities, and emancipatory research projects (2005). These seminars were named 'Research As Empowerment-Toronto Group' after the 4th International Empowerment Conference in Toronto in 1997. The results of the seminars were published in 2005 and included the recommendations that guidelines and principles of empowerment research are required, empowerment research should be encouraged, recognised and acknowledged as good research by mainstream funding bodies, service user groups should be encouraged and be able to apply for their own funding, training and dissemination of ideas about participatory research should be developed and that institutional conservatism of health and social care organisations should be challenged. Specific issues arise in the case of ethnic minority research in that researchers may not address the questions that people from black and minority ethnic groups see as a priority and when asked they reported that the research into their lives should be owned by the voluntary organisations and people themselves rather than by academic researchers.

The National Children's Bureau, UK, published a booklet on 'How to Involve children and young people in research' in 2009 with its own website and guide to existing resources at www.participationworks.org.uk.

1.3 The CSEYHP approach to working with co-researchers

The CSEYHP project took a different perspective from the SOVA project. The research project had been designed and written by academics working in the field of youth homelessness, with prior experience of working with young homeless people. The design had to be completed before the project was submitted and funding secured.

Young homeless people therefore had to be recruited in a similar way to other members of the research teams. Our term for the young people who joined our teams was therefore not 'peer researchers' but 'co-researchers'. The young people were to be trained as any staff interviewer would have been trained and rewarded at the same rate (a very important principle for this project). Close attention was paid to the ethical procedures of the project and the support systems that were made available.

In the CSEYHP study the main problem encountered was insufficient time to involve young people in all stages of the research, particularly the planning stage; this is discussed later. The training given to the young co-researchers overcame the other issues except that of young interviewees in some circumstances preferring an older interviewer.

2. Recruiting and Training the Co-Researcher teams

2.1 Different methods of recruitment

Agencies that were contacted during Phase 1 of the project in order to explain their work and complete key interviews, were re-contacted for proposals of young people to be recruited as co-researchers. The intended work was also advertised to other agencies working with homeless youth. These methods were used in NL, PT and the UK. In the UK some of the young people who filled in application forms were already engaged in young person's involvement activities through Centrepoin and St Basils. PT also used contacts from previous youth research. In CZ co-researchers were recruited through NGOs working with homeless population and private contacts of the researchers. In NL the team made particular use of an organisation that specialises in working together with homeless youth, the Projektenburo.

2.2 Composition of the research teams

Although all teams sought a spread of young people to work as co-researchers it was difficult to achieve this.

In CZ four co-researchers who were recruited were all Czech from the dominant group, aged between 18 and 26 years of age, and all were female.

In NL nine former homeless young people were recruited and seven participated in a training during the summer months to prepare them as interviewers in the research project. The group consisted of three young men and four young women aged between 19 and 25 with widely varying experiences and cultural backgrounds. One of the young men formerly was an underage asylum seeker in the Netherlands.

In PT four co-researchers were recruited for training, aged 22-24 years. One man was a refugee from Iran who had arrived as an adult, and one woman from Angola who had arrived with her family as a child. Two other women were Portuguese, one of mixed ethnic origin (Cape Verdean/Portuguese) and one from the dominant ethnic group. Two other young people who attended the first training session dropped out without explanation, and one other had to withdraw because she found a job.

In the UK all seven co-researchers who were recruited were female, although in other respects representative of the young people interviewed. Two were born outside the UK (Somalia and Eritrea), three were single parents, and their ages ranged from 17 through to 22 years. Two other young people who were recruited were unable to take up training places: one young man who was a refugee did not have a National Insurance number and one young woman's child was taken ill. All 7 young women who were recruited completed the training. Two of the young women had language difficulties – one was diagnosed dyslexic and another had difficulties with spelling - both worked very hard to learn the questionnaire despite its length and their success in doing this increased their own confidence. In the UK Criminal Record Bureau checks are required for anyone interviewing young people under the age of 18 years and preferable for all interviewers. The CRB checks were organised by B-Hug (see below).

2.3 Training teams

In the three of the countries – CZ, NL, and PT – the training was undertaken by the research teams themselves. The UK team sub-contracted B-Hug (Brent Homeless User

Group) as a training agency because of their prior experience of training young homeless people as researchers and consultants in research projects for local municipalities/boroughs. Members of the UK research team were present during the training period, engaged in the training sessions relating to the questionnaire, and also took the training sessions on ethics.

2.4 Training programmes

Each training programme had a similar content, with variations, and took between 2 and 8 days.

In CZ there was a 2 day training programme that focused on explaining the project objectives, the methodology of work and in-depth analysis, and the nature of the questionnaire. The training included practice interviews with co-researchers being interviewed or taking the part of the interviewer. All the co-researchers stated they were satisfied with the training they received before the interviews. They saw as very important and useful that the senior academics of the research team were present during the practice interviews, although in another room, so that they could receive immediate feedback. If something wasn't clear from the training it didn't matter as much because the constant presence of the senior research team enabled issues to be explained on the spot.

In NL there was a four day training programme:

1st day – getting to know each other, introduction to the CSEYHP project, an overview of the activities involved in co-researching and building competencies.

2nd day – the type of interview being conducted, practicing open and closed questions, types of questions in the questionnaire, and practising role playing.

3rd day – physical activity (climbing the Dom tower in Utrecht); analysis of the themes of the questionnaire, do's and don'ts in interviewing, nonverbal communication, ethics.

4th day – practising questionnaires in role play, rehearsing with the digital recording equipment. Making an inventory of the co-researchers' remarks.

The co-researchers evaluated the four day training positively. Comments varied, from 'well prepared', 'motivated trainers and participants', 'much information about the project' and 'practising role playing was fun'. Two co-researchers stated that they received ample opportunity to give their own opinions and had the space to discover things for themselves. Some of the co-researchers already had experiences with interviewing in another research project. The young persons with experience felt that some elements in the training were treated too elaborately. All co-researchers indicated that they found the training instructive and diverse. They thought the training was very valuable, but some also indicated that it was very tiring.

In PT there was a five day training programme:

1st day – getting to know each other; introduction to CSEYHP project objectives, role of co-researcher, elementary sociological concepts (social exclusion, housing exclusion, life trajectories, ethnic minorities); understanding and agreement of practical issues.

2nd day – What is an interview? What is a guided interview? Practising open and closed questions, types of questions in the questionnaire. Ethical issues

3rd day – Youth schedule (step by step), interview application, using the digital recording equipment.

4th day – Pilot youth schedule

5th day – Briefing. General objectives and training evaluation.

PT used a documentary "*Lisboetas*" that shows the reality of immigrants and irregular residents that are urban segregated, living in substandard conditions and are "(...) hidden in the vastness of the periphery, away from the sunny streets of the tourist centre"¹ (Morais – Storz, 2007). Some co-researchers recognized that they had lived in similar situations, for example getting up very early to go to places where construction builders recruit males living in irregular circumstances for cash-in-hand day jobs. So, when the PT team started brainstorming to explore the project's important sociological concepts, the participation of these co-researchers was massive and very rich, ending in comparisons with their own life experiences. The PT co-researchers evaluated the training positively. The majority liked the training in general, and some of them emphasised the documentary and particular contents.

In the UK there was an 8 day programme

1st day – getting to know each other; introduction to CSEYHP project objectives, accessing information in general including desk research. Discussion of the projects the young people would wish to investigate: 'single parents' and 'murder' were the topics chosen reflecting their particular experiences.

2nd day – Different research methods and their uses. A discussion on the roles of peer research. Explanation of the method used in the project.

3rd day – What is an interview? Active Listening Skills. Introducing the dual interview method (Open and closed), recording methods and digital recording equipment.

3rd day – Youth schedule (step by step), interview application, using the digital recording equipment.

4th day – Project questionnaire. Assignment.

5th day – Interview practice using a range of role play techniques. How to write up interview notes. Improve assignments. Contributing to the analysis of the questionnaires and drawing conclusions.

6th day – Written and verbal presentations of analysis

7th day – Ethics and confidentiality. Practice with questionnaire. Questions interviewees might ask about the research

8th day – Briefing. One to Ones with each co-researcher.

In the UK co-researchers evaluated the training positively, particularly the opportunities for role play on the introduction to the questionnaire and on Parts 1 and 2 of the questionnaire. Five have gone on to complete portfolios to achieve a module in the Open College Network. Of the other two, one has become a social work student and the other is in full-time employment. Five of the seven are continuing in education.

2.5 Accreditation of the research skills of the co-researchers

In NL during the training and interview period the co-researchers worked with accreditation of prior learning (EVC – Erkenning Verworven Competenties, Acknowledgement of Acquired Competencies), a method used extensively in the Netherlands. This method allows co-researchers to work on interview skills and to learn how to be an interviewer. They were assisted by the MOVISIE trainers. In order to demonstrate the co-researchers' developments during the project, the trainers worked with competencies. During the training every co-researcher selected three competencies that they wanted to work on from the competencies needed for interviewing, including: homeless young people, getting in contact and participating in research, communication, managing vulnerability and power, and time and pace management. For example, when a co-researcher talked too fast or pronounced the

¹ **MORAIS – STORZ**, Marta Angelica (2007) "Conflict and convergence: a proposition in Lisbon", Thesis of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

questions indistinctly, the MOVISIE trainer taught them how to take more time or to make eye contact while interviewing. During the interview period the co-researchers collected 'proof' to demonstrate that they had developed the competencies, for instance e-mails, references, text message or telephone conversations with the trainers. They could also collect proof from other private or volunteer activities. Most of the co-researchers were able to use the competencies gained in their education as evidence for other projects or in searching for a job. Eventually six co-researchers finished their EVC process and received a certificate. One person refrained because she felt she already had sufficient education. As a result of following the whole programme, the co-researchers received a certificate with their name, training, fieldwork and capabilities.

In the UK B-HUG offered a module from an Open College Network (OCN) certificate that was completed by 5 of the 7 co-researchers. References were available for young people and one young woman used the reference to support her application to a local college course.

In PT the accreditation of participation in training and working as an interviewer on the Project was given by the research institute (CIES) as part of the normal procedure. One co-researcher has already used this certificate as a reference of work experience for a job application.

In CZ there was no certificate.

2.6 Training on the questionnaire, piloting the questionnaire and discussions on the questionnaire with the co-researcher teams

The questionnaire was designed in two parts. Part One was a an open question asking the interviewee to describe turning points in their life whilst Part Two followed a semi-structured design with both open and closed questions. The questionnaire was developed by the four research teams prior to the training of co-researchers. Because the questionnaire had taken much effort it was difficult in a four country and four language study to allow sufficient time for all teams of co-researchers to make changes to the questionnaire, particularly in relation to language and some topics.

In PT, there was the greatest possibility to change some questions because this team went first into the field. The PT team thought it was very important they had co-researchers opinions on the youth schedule. The PT team found the co-researchers very helpful with good inputs, especially in improving the understanding of some questions relating to housing questions that were unclear or incomplete. Otherwise the questionnaire would have failed on the housing trajectories, particularly in PT.

In the UK co-researchers would have wanted to change some of the questions in the questionnaire and add some others – in particular they thought that a question should be added about gay and lesbian relationships and possibly a more detailed question about drug use. Once in the field they also thought that a question about being offered education services whilst homeless should have been asked directly. However this would have required changes to the UK questionnaire after PT had begun the interview process. The Toronto Group's finding that black and minority ethnic groups thought that topics relevant to them were not researched was partially true; young co-researchers when asked what they would have liked to have researched reported they would have liked to have discussed the topics of gang violence (an important topic with the rise of gangs in the UK) and of single parenthood.

In CZ almost all the co-researchers complained that the questionnaire was too long and not clear on some points or sometimes even missing something important. One co-researcher however thought that it was actually good that the questionnaire was so comprehensive, that it seemed to her the interviewees were happy they could talk to someone; sometimes it was impossible to stop them. They recommended that the questionnaire be made simpler and more understandable for "ordinary mortals", as one of the co-researchers said; to ask and talk much more about drugs and to find out about the age of the interviewees prior to interview.

They thought that some questions were duplicated e.g. "What would you like to do but you can't?" and "What would you like to do but you can't afford it", since most of the respondents couldn't do what they wanted because they couldn't afford it. They also suggested that should have been more questions about drugs, e.g. when they started using them, who introduced them to the drugs, who showed them where to find them, which drugs they used, etc.

In NL the co-researchers commented that the design of the questionnaire was quite useful. The various themes in the questionnaire were felt to be very important. During the training the co-researchers were asked which questions they would ask with regard to the themes. The assignment was: 'Think of the main question of the research project. We want to find out what causes people to become homeless'. The kind and the number of questions were largely similar to what the project partners had developed. Some co-researchers came up with completely different questions such as 'How old do you feel now?' and 'What did your homeless period signify for you?'

The co-researchers would have liked to see more questions on the use of alcohol and drugs. One person found that the young people in his interviews responded negatively to questions regarding social services. He felt that young people are disappointed in care provision, and thinks there should have been more questions about the functioning of care services.

Sometimes the co-researchers had to explain the meaning of words. In general the level of the questionnaire was good although co-researchers generally felt that the questions were too closed and this caused the interview to have the character of a survey more than an open conversation. They were put off by the jargon (too many complicated words). One co-researcher claimed to feel forty years older when using this language. In other words: the language used in the questionnaire did not correspond with the way in which young people would ask questions. Most of the co-researchers also found that many themes and questions overlapped. This annoyed some of the respondents. Sometimes they felt they asked the same question three times. In fact the length of the questionnaire caused them to have to rush to the end of the interview because respondents lost their concentration.

The NL team also reported that co-researchers required flexibility and open questions to get in touch with the respondents, to use their own ways of speech. The training paid attention to how to get in contact and still act in a scientifically sound way. There is a risk that co-researchers start rephrasing the questions according to their own ideas. The trainers discussed with the co-researchers that answers will not be reliable or comparable when the questions are phrased differently. Their insight in this matter grew during the training.

In the UK co-researchers reported that young people were happy with the questions that were asked and that no-one asked for the interview to be stopped while it was

being undertaken (3 people had not wanted to be recorded and were not interviewed). There were a few questions that they felt were repetitive.

Overall the comments of the co-researchers on the questionnaire highlighted the advantage to the PT team of going first. It suggests that the CSEYHP project should have built additional time into the work on the questionnaire to allow co-researchers from all teams to have given their opinions. To have added this input would have required another month of development and a further steering committee meeting which the timescale did not allow. This was a failing in the research design because including the perspective of the young people from all nationalities on the questionnaire would have been very useful.

2.7 Training in ethics

The **PT** researchers reported that the ethical standards of the research process were a special topic developed during their training as a way to raise the awareness among co-researchers that they were dealing with a person's life during the interview. The ethical guidelines used in this project were the following:

- 1) Appreciation – Co-researchers should thank the interviewee for their time, acknowledge their interest and inform them that young people's voices will be respected and have an important value for this study.
- 2) Free choice – Interviewees should be informed that they can leave the interview at any moment or not answer a particular question.
- 3) Complaints – Co-researchers should explain and give the contact details of the person to whom interviewee should complain in cases in which the interviewee objected to something in the interview or the conduct of the interview.
- 4) Research aims and dissemination – Co-researchers should explain the aims of the study, the process, who will read the reports, the dissemination strategy, including the national workshops.
- 5) Confidentiality – Co-researchers should guarantee to each interviewee that their answers and any information provided by them, will be confidential in any report. The only moment that this confidence could be broken is if they tell the co-researcher something that means they are being harmed or someone else is at risk or might be at risk of being being harmed. We had special guidelines for interviews with young people less than 18 years old.
- 6) Payment – Co-researchers should explain that, at the end of the interview, the interviewee will receive an envelope with 15 Euros (the amount varied between country) for taking part in this study and being interviewed. This money was given against the signature on a receipt.
- 7) Consent form – This document was read aloud by co-researchers at the beginning of each interview. After that, it was given to the interviewee to sign as proof of their permission to participate in the interview, and that they have understood the whole information. In addition, the consent form also included the name of the project, the name of the interviewer, the name of the interviewee and the permission, or not, for the interview to be recorded.

Another ethical norm that was not mentioned before, but which had a particular relevance, was the necessity to allocate co-researchers to interviews with young people living in different residential areas. The main reason for this allocation was to ensure the confidentiality of the interviews as well as to not cause any embarrassment to the interviewee. There were three interviewees that were not recorded due to their fear of being recognised through their voice, e.g. one young woman was undocumented and was afraid of being caught. The interviewees had been informed before of the nature of the interviews (as the ethic guidelines lay down) but only

realised the full situation during the long introduction which stressed both the recording of the interviews and the possibility of withdrawing immediately.

In the UK a similar procedure was followed (although the payment was £20) and Nora Duckett from the UK research team undertook the training on ethics. Three points were emphasised in relation to the two pages of instructions that were read out to each young interviewee:

- Young interviewees did not have to answer the questionnaire and their participation was completely voluntary;
- Young interviewees did not have to answer any particular question;
- Young interviewees were informed that the interview had to be recorded.

A lot of time was spent during the training period working on this part of the questionnaire. In the UK these instructions proved to be very important. Three interviewees (two young women and one young man, all refugees) stopped the interview immediately when they realised they would be recorded concerned that their voice would be recognised. They were reassured by our information in the consent form that stopping the interview was their decision. Following these events we were able to reassure the co-researchers that this was precisely the purpose of the two page introduction. Young interviewees had to feel free to withdraw.

A similar experience happened in **NL** when young people refused to continue. However, during the training in NL young people did not fully understand the purpose of this introduction, thinking it too extensive and long-winded. They found it difficult to start with the introduction because they were afraid that the respondents would lose interest. This needed a lot of rehearsing in training.

During the training in NL questions were asked about the 'rules' regarding the ethical directives, for example that the respondent needs to sign a statement and co-researchers should not link the respondent's name to the questionnaire. The co-researchers had a clear notion of the ethical directive but the administrative aspects of the consent form were felt to be difficult to combine with the interview itself. Their basic concern was that they had too many things to think about. This made some co-researchers feel uncertain. Co-researchers also required more flexibility and open questions to get in touch with respondents, to use their own ways of speech. The training paid attention to how to get in contact and still act in a scientifically sound way. There is a risk that co-researchers begin to rephrase questions according to their own ideas. The trainers discussed with the co-researchers that answers would not be reliable or comparable if they were phrased differently and their insight in this matter grew during the training.

During the research period the NL trainers got a better grasp of the way in which the co-researchers functioned. There were big differences between them which required a lot of personal attention. This makes it all the more gratifying that each one of them developed in his or her own way and their work became of significant importance for the study.

In CZ special attention was given to the issue of the anonymity of the respondents. There was a list of recommended responses available for difficult situations (e.g. how to respond if someone confesses to committing a criminal act or is exposed to a criminal act) drawn up by the UK team and expanded on by the CZ team. During the whole period of the research both senior researchers from the research team were present while the interviews were ongoing and they helped solve situations that presented complications e.g. one respondent being under age, acute influence of drugs etc. Payment in food coupons was given at the end of the interview against the

signature. It was especially emphasized to the co-researchers that interviews were voluntary and they were supplied with a list of organisation to give to each respondent should s/he want further help.

3. Fieldwork

3.1 Organising the fieldwork

In CZ interviews took place at one institution (Salvation Army, Prague) with young homeless people unknown to this agency. Co-researchers were supported throughout by the research team.

In NL co-researchers were scheduled to undertake the work independently. During the interview period co-researchers were prepared well and sent train tickets with routes mapped. Following each interview a trainer called the co-researcher for a short briefing on how the interview went. A companion was present for support during each co-researcher's first interview, and subsequently if required. It was a relief for the co-researchers that they did not have to recruit the young people themselves.

In PT researchers contacted institutions but also produced a small brochure (with the project objectives, target population, interview payment and a mobile contact) that was given to one of the institutions that had participated in the key-worker interviews ("Comunidade Vida e Paz"), for dissemination on their night outreach teams (on the streets). For this effect, the team created a specific mobile phone account.

The institutions that were contacted were asked to fill in a table of information on their clients so that the research team could check if their selection fitted the criteria. Since there are no specific homelessness services it is important to know in advance the housing path of the clients in order to make a maximum effort to fit the quota sample selection of the CSEYHP project.

The co-researchers who contacted the 'hidden' homeless population through their own contacts exchanged interviewees between them so they would not know the situation of the young person and were able to respect the ethical guidelines the project had laid down. This had a positive impact on reaching interviewees in situations of exclusion and hidden homelessness

In the UK interviews took place at agencies that had participated in the key worker interviews in London, Thames Gateway, Birmingham and Herefordshire. But they also took place at agencies that worked with young people at risk of street homelessness or exploitation – New Horizons, Alone in London, and Barnardo's Young Women's Project. In all situations except the final individual interviews co-researchers were accompanied by senior members of the research team. Co-researchers recruited from St Basil Projects were also accompanied by a member of staff. The members of the research team and agency staff were in a nearby room.

3.2 Fieldwork in unfamiliar settings

In both NL and UK there are extensive services for young homeless people, some of whom may receive support for many months or more than one year. It was therefore important in these countries that co-researchers interviewed young people that they are unlikely to ever meet again and therefore geographic distance was considered important.

In NL it was possible for co-researchers to travel out from Utrecht to other cities and regions. Most of the co-researchers dreaded travelling to another city as they preferred to stay in their own city and to interview people they knew. But to maintain a regional distribution and the stranger principle between co-researchers and interviewers, they had to travel by train to unknown areas and venues. In the evaluation the co-researchers said that they felt more at ease after a few interviews and were able to adapt more quickly to new situations.

In the UK co-researchers were recruited from two areas, London and Birmingham, cities over a hundred miles apart. Co-researchers from St Basils, Birmingham, interviewed in the London agencies from which London co-researchers had been recruited, and in Herefordshire, a rural area on the borders with Wales. London based co-researchers interviewed in St Basil projects in Birmingham, in Thames Gateway and in London agencies whose services had not been used by them. Co-researchers were accompanied by the research team on all occasions except for a few final individual interviews arranged through Alone in London. St Basil co-researchers were also accompanied by a member of staff from the St Basil Youth Involvement Team. Co-researchers were accommodated in London and Birmingham for 2-3 days and enjoyed the experience of being away as a team.

3.3. Support and Safety during Fieldwork

In CZ all interviews were accompanied by the research team who were present during interview days at the Salvation Army. One CZ co-researcher reported that it was crucial for her confidence that she knew that senior research team members were around during the time. This was not only because of advice they could provide but also because talking about individual cases between the two interviews (also sometimes including the other co-researchers) helped ease the pressure they sometimes felt and made them feel more relaxed and safe in general. Everybody was happy with the choice of the premises (the Salvation Army, Prague) because this was opportunity for the interviewees to find out about it and about the services available to them. They all agreed it was a very good idea to include refreshments and to give food coupons, which served as a major motivation for participants in the research.

In NL almost all interviews took place within institutions under the guidance of key workers or general social workers. During the first interviews one member of the Dutch research team joined the co-researcher. Together with the social worker a safe and separate room or space could be found. One boy, living in the street, was interviewed in a bar on the central station by one of the members of the research team because of safety reasons. No safety issues were reported for any interview.

In PT interviews took place at the institutions, at ISCTE premises and, in some particular cases, in a car or in the interviewee's bedroom. This could seem against the ethical and safety principles of the research, but neither interviewee nor interviewer was placed into risk. The research team accompanied co-researchers to back up them up, and to find out their immediate first impressions. The PT team used the time before interviews to remind co-researchers about respecting the interviewee, the ethical norms and how to conduct the interview. There was always close phone contact between interviewers and researchers, before and after interviews took place. Co-researchers therefore knew that everything was under control

In the UK support was given by the UK research team, the young involvement team at St Basils and staff at other agencies in which interviews took place including the Youth Involvement Team at Centrepont. Co-researchers were accompanied for the

first four months of the project. One co-researcher was allowed to go to agencies where the team had already introduced her, on her own at the end of the project. This was to one of the agencies contacting street homeless youth where frequently the young people who had been contacted did not attend.

3.4 Experience of using the questionnaire in the field

In CZ the co-researchers noted several difficulties about the questionnaire:

- the questionnaire could be an obstacle to the free flow of thought of the interviewees;
- it was important that the interviews were recorded because it was not possible to note all the answers;
- some interviewees did not answer the questions at the point they were asked but did answer at a different point and sometimes the co-researchers had to navigate the interviewees in order for them to answer certain questions,
- the interviews were long and some interviewees became tired;
- Questions about income embarrassed young people in CZ because they had none and were ashamed to admit they were begging. Also the question about income was difficult because young people were not sure about the idea of net or gross income.

Quite a lot of interviewees, according to the CZ co-researchers, had no idea what to answer to the question of service provision. The co-researchers had to ask them specifically about various services, e.g. they didn't know what mediation was. It seems this points to very poor knowledge about services provided to homeless youth in CZ. These questions seemed abstract to them, they didn't know what we were trying to find out. This corresponds with the observations of the CZ research team that social workers at the Salvation Army were surprised to see so many young homeless persons who applied for our interview (one of the social workers said: "Where did they crawl out from?").

Other issues noted by the co-researchers from CZ was the problem of identifying people who were under the influence of drugs during the interview, and whether to terminate the interview when it became clear that the interviewee had lied about their age. In CZ some interviewees were over the age limit for the interview but co-researchers carried on with the interview before they had guidance.

In NL co-researchers were worried whether they would be able to complete the questionnaire within 2 hours but after a few interviews co-researchers managed to do this. They also were afraid that they might make mistakes in recording the interviews – what if the equipment did not work? Co-researchers wanted more guidance on what to do if the interviewees presented particular problems. In NL as in CZ some interviewees were on drugs and co-researchers would have liked guidance on that.

In PT some co-researchers reported they felt insecure because it was always a strange environment for them. Others spoke about things that shocked them but others believed that their experience was helpful to conduct the interviews because, as one said, "*I know that world since my childhood and I know the slang and what they are saying*". Nevertheless, the most powerful situation that happened in these interviews was the statement of one co-researcher who knew exactly the experience told in one of the interviews (about stealing to eat) because he had had to do the same.

One question that many interviewees found difficult to grasp was question number 2.18 – "Are there any services that would have made a difference to you whilst

growing up?" The co-researchers did not manage to get answers about services for prevention, in the sense of "what you didn't get that would have been relevant" but instead received answers about "the important services that were used". More role-play could have tackled these difficulties; this demonstrates that that the exercise of conducting the interviews among the trainees is important and requires improvement.

Co-researchers also raised a technical question about interviewer position during the interview. Where should the interviewer sit in relation to the interviewee? One of them mentioned that some interviews were undertaken behind a desk, which he believed created an invisible barrier, and limited the empathy between interviewer and interviewee.

In the UK co-researchers thought that interviews went well depending on the atmosphere that was created immediately ('it's the way you welcome them that makes them relaxed and comfortable') and depending on the situation of the person being interviewed - those who were still sleeping rough (street homeless) were most interested in what services could help them. One researcher said that it was like socialising except that you were asking them 20 questions. She reported that the questionnaire had a few questions that had to be repeated in 'more human' language. She also thought it would have been useful if training had been longer - 2 weeks rather than 8 days.

UK co-researchers differed as to whether young men or young women were the most open interviewees; two thought that women were more guarded in their responses whilst young men were more likely to open up whilst one thought the reverse. (When a member of the research team listened to the recordings she thought that young women actually gave more information.) They also found that there were a lot of services that young people were not aware of and were surprised about this.

4. Co-researchers assessment of their work and their impact on the project

Group interviews were undertaken at the end of the field work with co-researchers to assess their experience. CZ and NL held one group interview. PT interviewed 4 co-researchers in pairs and this worked well; co-researchers were eager to give their opinions and these opinions were independent of the other co-researchers. The UK held 2 meetings, a group interview in London with 3 co-researchers and an interview in Birmingham attended by 1 co-researcher. In all four countries every co-researcher was given the opportunity to attend.

Points from these co-researcher evaluations of the project and their work:

- When co-researchers told interviewees that they had also been homeless, or were still homeless, this broke the ice. Respondents felt less ashamed and there was a more equal relationship between co-researcher and interviewee. (Reported by CZ, NL, PT and UK).
- Co-researchers also thought it was more helpful that they were at the level of the interviewees - 'age, group-wise and some of the time we use slang. I tried not to use slang as much - to conduct myself properly - but just to show that I'm no better than them'. (UK)
- Co-researchers also functioned as a role model for the interviewees. They demonstrated that they had overcome their situation and that progress was possible (Reported NL and UK). In the UK co-researchers often answered these

questions after the recording of the interview had stopped and they could encourage the interviewees with advice on how they themselves had managed.

- Co-researchers were also asked their advice about services and how they had accessed support (UK). In CZ a list of services was offered which the co-researchers thought was very helpful. In PT the list of services supplied by co-researchers was well received and if an interviewee expressed an interest in a particular service the co-researcher gave them more advice.
- Co-researchers thought they managed to achieve a clear and truthful picture of the person before them and thought they were better able to judge the interviewee's honesty and truthfulness than an academic researcher (CZ).
- In the UK one co-researcher had a great impact on the project in that she was able to interview 5 young people from Eritrea and Ethiopia in their own languages and then translate and transcribe these interviews. She said that when they spoke in their own language they told her they felt alone, that they had no home and they were not welcome. They could not speak English and were struggling to communicate in the agencies and her presence as a co-researcher allowed the UK team to give them a voice.
- It was difficult for co-researchers to deal with the emotional issues raised by some life stories of the interviewees. They dealt with this issue differently. One young person in NL said she wanted to distance herself in order not to be touched too much by these stories. In the UK one young co-researcher reported that she was overwhelmed by the life story of another young woman; she reported she thought she had a rough childhood and tough life but this other young person's life was really challenging. (NL, UK)
- When co-researchers worked in teams it was more difficult to deal with the emotional issues of the interviews. In the UK the team had stressed confidentiality and they did not want to discuss any case outside of the interview. They needed to be in one to one situations with the researchers but this only happened occasionally because of travelling as a team.
- A special issue in CZ was whether to use the *vous* or *tu* form during the interviews. Some co-researchers used *tu* from because they felt more personal relation helped the interviewees open more. However others used the *vous* form, because they felt that the interview was an official thing and they didn't want it to resemble anything private. In PT using the *tu* or not was discussed in advance in the training and the indication was to start with the formal *você* but if the "clima" would become more relaxed co-researchers could spontaneously use the *tu*. The usage had to follow the clues given by the interviewee.
- In PT the team spirit generated among the co-researchers was particularly useful when compensating for a last minute change of plans, or if one co-researcher could not make the interview, s/he would contact another one. This also shows the concern for the project to work and the equal distribution of the income since they were paid per interview that was made.

What had they learned from the project that surprised them? Thoughts for our analysis...

In CZ co-researchers reported that they had learned about the variety of people who become homeless. They also thought they could share their experience with others. For them it was refreshing and new to be in a position of a researcher, to have a strong goal to aim at and a precise methodology to follow.

The NL co-researchers reported that they had been surprised by how much young people wanted to get on with their lives; they were not sitting back and relying on other people as common ideas had it. One co-researcher reported that it was wonderful to experience that he functioned as a role model; he felt respected when he explained his past at the beginning of the interview. The fact that it is possible for a homeless or former homeless person to be an interviewer surprised the respondents and allowed them to realise that progress was possible. Co-researchers were also surprised by their own capabilities. They became more serious following the training because they realised that the research depended on them. The co-researchers took over a lot of the work of the Dutch research team and it made them feel important; they were very proud to collect the interview data. After a while the co-researchers felt more at ease doing the fieldwork. For example, they were able to travel alone to an interview location which they found very difficult in the start.

In PT they reported that it was especially important that they were participating both in a European project where experiences of young people from different countries were being compared and would contribute at the EU level, and also that they were contributing to improve the life of young people in their country who are experiencing similar issues as they had in the past. They also highlighted the importance of knowing different realities and different cultures in order to enrich their skills. Additionally, they considered it important to become aware of other realities which made them think about their own past; some co-researchers found this important because they realised that their realities were not as bad as they had thought and also that they were now following the right path.

In the UK the co-researchers were surprised by the range of reasons that people became homeless, by their lack of awareness of services that are available, and by the lack of communication between some young people and their key worker in the homeless agencies. The other finding was how little support some young people got from Social Services – *'Its like when you reach a certain age you're being cared about less... 12, 13, 14. things happen during them times to young adults. Certain things that they've been through, they've told and had no one to turn to'*. They also thought the research should have focussed on whether the young person had been offered education services whilst they were homeless. They felt they had learned that there should be equal opportunities for everyone and that their message for the European Union would be: *'I think people need to recognise that we're all human and need to be treated fairly, regardless if someone has money or no money, they all need to be treated equally.'*

5. Advantages of working with Co-researchers

The CZ team reported that the advantage of working with co-researchers lies predominantly in their greater proximity to the young homeless population. Also the generation gap is smaller. Due to their own experience as young homeless people they could understand better the wider context of the questionnaire – including both whether the respondents were telling the truth and also which questions might embarrass them.

The NL team reported that: 'For us as trainers it has been an exciting, fun, challenging learning process. Like the co-researchers our expectations regarding the training and the interview period were high. The interaction between trainer and co-researcher was of the utmost importance. During the training we paid attention to

motivation, atmosphere and a good mix of fun and formal matters. It is important to invite the co-researchers to share their ideas and their worries, so that we trainers can react adequately to situations and help them to come up with solutions.' The trainers felt responsible for the well-being of the co-researchers. Because the trainers knew the personal situation of the co-researchers they were able to assist them in the way they needed. It was very unique to work that closely and to follow their progress.

Co-researchers' views and attitudes shed a new light on the research. For example, their feedback on the questionnaire and their opinions about the respondents were very useful. During the training and evaluation, the co-researchers spoke about their own experiences, sharing them with the trainers. They explained why it was so difficult to escape their situation. In their opinion the only person that can save you is yourself and if a young person does not have a social worker to support them, they have no motivation to go forward. According to the trainers the co-researchers were very open and sharing the results of the fieldwork with them has made the research more realistic.

The PT team reported that the **positive aspects** of working with co-researchers were:

- Four different people that did not know each other, from different cultures, different life trajectories, and different backgrounds (Angola, Portugal, Cape Verde and Iran), came together with immediate empathy and co-operation;
- Motivated, dynamic, communicative and showing an interest in learning;
- Received a certificate of attendance and were paid for their work;
- Close relation between co-researchers and researcher;
- Youth schedule inputs;
- "Snow ball effect" contacts through co-researchers allowed the PT team to reach the diversity of youth at risk of homelessness that we were looking for;
- Evaluation of the training and the experience.

In PT these positive aspects were essential to build a good environment inside and outside the classroom from the first day of the training. Co-researchers tried to arrive on time, shared their doubts, spoke about their lives and shared their cultural differences. For instance, the Iranian wrote in Farsi the names of all co-researchers, and shared some photos of his country. In the end, this empathy among them and the close relationship between researchers as well, lead to the success of the training, and of the interviews application as well.

In the UK the seven young people worked as two teams – one team from London and one from Birmingham. Within these two teams there was considerable support and interaction with each other and with the research team. The three young mothers from Birmingham managed their time very well in order to be able to contribute to the training and the research. The advantages they brought to the research process were that they were motivated and developed close relationships with the research team and brought their own knowledge to the process. One young woman who had experience not only of social care but also of participating in designing agency interventions as a user was very helpful in discussing the ethics of contact and how to approach young people. Two young women had lived in different countries and spoke different languages. This was of enormous value to the project as one young woman interviewed five young people in their own languages (Eritrean and Tigrean) and translated the interviews for us. These young people could not have participated fully unless interviewed in their own language and they gave us an insight into the isolation of young people who have not yet achieved language competence in the country to which they have fled.

All the personalities of the co-researchers were different. It was a youthful research team and the interview trips were great fun for both the co-researchers and the research team. It was also a good experience for young people that they should be rewarded appropriately for their involvement. It was only possible to pay one young woman directly because she was a student on a grant but this payment was very important – it allowed her to pay all her rent arrears and prevented her becoming evicted and homeless again and allowed her to remain in college. The other young people were rewarded with computers and payments for internet access that would help their studies in the next three years. It did feel as if the research itself was helping these young people move forward in their future lives.

6. Disadvantages of working with co-researchers

The **CZ** team reported contradictory attitudes to interviewees which could be based on the co-researchers' own perspectives. One co-researcher said that the interviewees were honest and funny and it seemed they did not mind that the interview was so long. This is in sharp contrast to another co-researcher who thought that the interviewees were lying and making up things in order to get a food coupon. The same can be said about the assessment of interest of the interviewees in research. One co-researcher said they seemed to have been quite interested and that it meant something to them that the research was international, the interviewees felt it was important to do such research to make them visible. Yet another co-researcher thought the interviewees were indifferent.

The NL team reported difficulties with engagement. Sometimes the co-researcher missed appointments through arriving late, being ill or unable to attend. The long stretch of time made it harder for the MOVISIE trainers to keep the co-researchers available. It was almost impossible for co-researchers to combine school, work and other engagements with conducting the interviews. The no-show also played a role during the training. Co-researchers often came late or did not show up at all. A steady group of three co-researchers followed the whole training. Therefore a number of co-researchers were required to make up a few parts of the training. The trainers worked with these co-researchers individually on interview skills so that they would be able to conduct interviews. In July 2009 everybody felt secure enough to conduct the interviews. It is evident that the situation of the co-researchers was a little unstable. Some co-researchers had various reasons for not showing up or being late: they were ill, had a headache, couldn't get out of bed. It took the MOVISIE trainers a lot of time and patience and created some uncertain feelings about the fieldwork. A huge co-researcher responsibility is wonderful but the research project also should not be put at risk. The Dutch team had to seek a balance between stimulating co-researchers and taking care of the research. It is important to realise that this is part of peer-research.

The PT team reported that some problems were found during the interviews and at the conclusion of interview.

- Some language barriers were found when an interviewee asked the interviewer to explain some question better. This situation was particularly felt by the Iranian male who had some difficulties in reformulating questions into other words.
- Youth schedule limitations. Some co-researchers had difficulties with follow-on questions. For instance, in question 5.1 – "Please tell us all your activities at the moment?" there was an option "self-employed" that was chosen a few times by

interviewees, but unfortunately none of the co-researchers remembered to ask what type of self employment it was.

- In relation to professional and job situation, the decisions taken by the co-researchers present some risks to the dataset due to their unfamiliarity with these concepts. A description of the activity and labour contract to complement the categorization decided by the co-researcher could have been helpful.
- Payment to interviewees was based on a simple form with the name of the interviewee and date, authorizing the use of the interview for this study. However, there were some institutions, especially night shelter and rehab centre, that showed reluctance about this payment because according to key-workers those youth are extremely vulnerable because of their addictions. In the end, both institutions decided that the money should be given to the youth, but in front of one key-worker, which would guarantee that the payment would go directly to the client's bank account.
- The duration of the interview, around two hours, can be seen as both a constraint and as a tool to help interviewees speak about themselves. However, there was more than one case that needed more than one break to get some fresh-air. Hence, although interviews could have been in more depth in order to understand the life trajectory as a whole, they would have also become even longer.

The PT team felt that even though there was an effort to select co-researchers and give them an intensive training it is still quite difficult to guarantee that they will be really prepared to conduct an interview in a manner similar to professional researchers. In future this could be addressed with a longer training period, probably two weeks, with more activities, materials and more practice to deal with unexpected answers. Reflecting on the co-researchers' own suggestions it is interesting to note that co-researchers understood their limitations and difficulties in conducting the interviews, and suggested the implementation of a role-playing interview in combination with the pilot schedule to improve that.

Payments of co-researchers themselves were, in general, not a problem, until the moment co-researchers were asked for essential documents for the payment of their services. For example, one of them used a third person to write a receipt, in order to avoid problems with Social Services.

In the UK the team found that two of the co-researchers had difficulties with literacy. One of them understood this and worked very hard to manage the questionnaire. Listening to the recordings of her interviews the research team found that in general the young interviewees and the co-researcher with reading difficulties read over the questionnaire together – for young interviewees who were themselves dyslexic this was very encouraging but did mean that some questions were answered with difficulty and interviews were longer than with other interviewers.

As with NL some young people were late for training days and this annoyed other co-researchers who had arrived on time. One co-researcher was required by her Benefits Agency to undertake other training during part of the training period and the first weeks of interviewing. She made up the training by meeting separately with the trainers at their office. On other occasions one young mother had to return home because her child was ill, and London young people arrived late because they were trying to buy the cheap day tickets, although we reimbursed them for their travel.

Reimbursement for their work as co-researchers was only made through a direct payment in the case of one young woman who was a full time student on a grant.

Others were compensated by payments to the agencies that bought them computer equipment and internet access in order to further their future studies.

7. Recommendations

The PT team produced a series of proposals to **improve and reinforce** research work with co-researchers, which are endorsed by the UK team with some small additional points:

- Certification and payment were important factors to motivate co-researchers to find more contacts and do more interviews;
- Co-researcher heterogeneity is important to reach diverse interviewees when co-researchers are challenged to find more youth contacts (PT); it also allows in some cases for interviews to be conducted in the language most comfortable for a young person not born in the host country (UK).
- Close relations between co-researchers and researchers are very important. This relationship is only possible if there was a capacity from both sides to work together and team work is developed during the training and interview period.
- Improvements to the Youth Interview Schedule made by co-researchers were important for both sides in PT. Researchers were able to improve the youth schedule based on co-researcher suggestions, and co-researchers felt they were part of this project as people who had lived the reality of the project (PT). It is important that all teams in a multi-country research project have the time to do this before starting the fieldwork (UK). This requires building in additional time for questionnaire development.
- It is advisable, in order to keep young people engaged with the project, to shorten as much as possible the period between informing the co-researcher they are selected, the training, and conduct of the interviews (PT). However, it is necessary that a meeting of the research teams should be held when all co-researcher training has finished prior to interviewing in order to work on the final version of the questionnaire. This requires that teams train in the same period (UK).
- It is advisable to increase the training period from one week to two weeks. PT co-researchers would have liked to include a role-playing interview in order to generate more discussion about misleading questions; to get practice in the position of interviewer/interviewee (environment, eye contact, timing of interview, etc). So, instead of 5 days, they suggested to have 6 days of training to clarify everything (PT).
- Along with the explanation of the sociological concepts with audio-visual support (film), it is necessary to also include a role-play interview as a way to generate debate about the whole interview process, and clarify the interview process (PT). However, for the UK the reverse was true in that role plays and recording practice was very prevalent in the training but more time should have been spent on the concepts behind the research and it would have been useful to have adopted the practice of PT.
- The existence of a checklist on "what you need to check before interview" has proved an efficient means of avoiding possible disorganisation when conducting the interview.

- Evaluations of both training and field work were important means of gathering co-researchers' own opinion which were helpful for CSEYHP teams and for future research projects involving co-researchers.
- The invitation to participate in the national workshops was a challenge that was accepted by co-researchers with some satisfaction in both PT and UK.
- It will be a challenge to re-contact the co-researchers on a long-term basis. Moreover, it should be considered which preliminary results (and when) will be shared with co-researchers in order to get their feedback. It is possible that the full executive summary of the results of the interviews should be sent to all of them.

References

Hurley N and Duxbury G (1999) *Engaging Disaffected Young People in Environmental Regeneration*. Birmingham, Groundwork UK

Kirby P (1999) *Involving Young People in Research*, available through the Joseph Rowntree Foundation York at www.jrf.org.uk

Kirby P (2004) *A guide to actively involving young people in research*, available at [www.invo.org.uk/pdfs/Involving Young People in Research](http://www.invo.org.uk/pdfs/Involving_Young_People_in_Research)

Morris J (1998) *Don't Leave Us Out: Involving disabled children and young people with communication impairments*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation York at www.jrf.org.uk

Noom, M.J & M de Winter (2001) *Op zoek naar verbondenheid. Zwerfjongeren aan het woord over de verbetering van de hulpverlening*. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht & Nederlands Platform

Zwerfjongeren. (In search of alliances. Homeless youth speaking about the improvement of social services).

Noom, M.J., Winter, M. de & Korf, D.J. (2008). The care-system for homeless youth in the Netherlands: Perceptions of youngsters through a peer-research approach. *Adolescence*, 43, 303-316.

Toronto Group (2005) *Research as Empowerment?* Available at www.jrf.org.uk in .pdf form.

Organizations and websites

B-Hug at www.brenthomeless.com

.Carnegie Young People's Initiative at cypi.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/publications

Groundswell at www.groundswell.org.uk

National Youth Reference Group, at www.natiionalyouthreferencegroup.co.uk

Participation Works at www.participationworks.org.uk

SOVA (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action) programme is hosted at Sheffield Hallam University and the outputs of the Women into Work programme can be found at their website. www.shu.ac.uk/research/hccj/publications_wiwr.html

The Young Researcher network at the National Youth Agency www.nya.org.uk