

Local Partnership and YOUNGSTERS / COOPERATION IN DEVELOPMENT

- France

In the framework of a partnership between the region Nord Pas de Calais and the Moroccan region Doukala Abda and, more specifically, a cooperation between the City of Dunkerque and the City of El Jadida, a specific programme for the exchange of young people was developed and has been running since 2007.

Leader of the initiative is the association "AJS, le bon emploi de la solidarité". The aforementioned regions as well as the Ministry for Youth and Sports of Morocco and the City of Dunkerque are partners.

The objectives of the youth exchange are multi-fold. First of all, it aims to promote mutual understanding and solidarity among and between the youngsters on both sides of the Mediterranean. Moreover, through the programme youngsters are to discover the living conditions in the other country, social and economic realities and, of course, culture. An important focus lies on the fight against stereotypes and on awareness-raising regarding the contribution young people may make to development and international cooperation. Finally, the promoters also intend to give youngsters from families with a migration background the opportunity to get in touch with the culture of their parents.

The coordinating association AJS and the above mentioned partners do not only share costs, but also jointly develop and organize the activities of this programme. Several smaller cities and municipalities in and around Dunkerque such as Grande Synthe, Saint Pole sur Mer, Graveline or Fort Mardick took over costs and organization of a number of day trips. Moreover, all partners opened their premises for meetings between the youngsters.

A steering committee, composed of all partners, meets on a regular basis to plan upcoming activities, evaluate past actions and select the participants (at least five youngsters from each city, chosen based on criteria fixed by the cities themselves). It also defines the theme of exchange for each year (theme 2007: environment; 2008: security in street traffic; 2009: intercultural dialogue).

The association "AJS, Le bon emploi de la solidarité" was founded in March 1985 in Dunkerque (France) by a group of young women with migration background. It works directly on the ground, for and with disadvantaged parts of society. Activities go thus

beyond work with migrants and are very much focused on insertion of disadvantaged persons in society through employment. Women and youngsters are an important target group for AJS. The objective of the association is to help these groups regaining their social autonomy. In addition, AJS is developing a specific centre for health and youth which will provide a wide range of leisure activities and assistance to youngsters.