



Enfants d'ici ou d'ailleurs intern Véronique Côté at the school in Hammamet, Tunisia, where she taught cross-cultural training and issues related to La Francophonie, human security, civic duty and the environment

On-your-own programs

The Internship Program is only one of the ways that DFAIT helps youth expand their international horizons.

The Department also negotiates international agreements that allow young Canadians to work overseas under four other arrangements: the Working Holiday Program; the Student Work Abroad Program (SWAP); the Young Workers' Exchange Program; and the Co-op Program. "We build the road for youngsters to go abroad," says Michel Gigault, head of the section responsible for the agreements. He calls the programs "Canada's best-kept secret" for youth, and estimates that they have facilitated some 36,000 exchanges worldwide, with equal numbers of Canadian interns travelling abroad and foreign interns coming to Canada. He adds, "Youth from other countries experience Canadian culture and values when they come here. Many of the participants who have gone on to play important roles in their own countries as diplomats or business leaders say that their experience in Canada translated into better relations as well as increased trade between our two countries."

The programs target youth between the ages of 18 and 30. The aim is to provide new skills in international employment, as well as exposure to foreign cultures. Participants apply for temporary permits to work abroad; implementing organizations often help them find a job.

Three years ago, 22-year-old Dara Parker of Richmond Hill, Ontario, went to Ireland through SWAP, for which the Canadian Federation of Students is the implementing organization. She found a job in a hotel bar on Ireland's west coast, enabling her to experience Irish culture and tour the country. "Being somewhere new and meeting people from all over the world was the fun and encouraging part," she says; what she valued most was "gaining a new perspective into a different culture."

Since SWAP was established in 1975, agreements have allowed over 25,000 youth to travel and work abroad. The program currently sends 2,700 youth abroad annually. Participants choose their jobs by going to a country's partner organization and looking at what's available. Once they find something of interest, they attend an orientation session and are sent on their way. "It definitely inspired me to continue travelling and seek out other cultural experiences," says Dara; she has since visited Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and France. SWAP made things easier for her and gave her important contacts. She considers it a great program for anybody who's nervous about making a first trip or who wants a safety net.

Front-line foreign policy

Still other programs, often involving partner organizations, give youth a role in furthering Canada's foreign policy objectives. One such partner is Enfants d'ici ou d'ailleurs [Children from here or abroad]. This non-governmental organization focuses on human security in countries of La Francophonie. Each year it organizes one-year internships for 20 students aged 20 to 25 from the Université de Montréal and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Interns spend nine months studying human security issues with the program coordinators. Next they go to Quebec schools to gain teaching experience. They then

Take YouthPath to your goals

The Internet can be confusing and even intimidating. Is there a site where can you track down the specific information you need and be confident that what you have found is reliable? Canadian youth have such a place: YouthPath.

Launched in March 2002, YouthPath is a Web site designed by youth for youth. It covers all Government of Canada programs, services and information of interest to young people. Whether it's education, travel or employment, you can learn about it here.

Led by Human Resources Development Canada, YouthPath is the outcome of the work of about 400 young Canadians and 16 federal departments, including DFAIT. It is one of the government's biggest on-line initiatives.

With its youth-oriented format and layout, YouthPath is an example of the government's efforts to involve young people in government projects. It features a youth news team, reporting on stories relevant to young Canadians for posting on the site. It has sound, motion, animation, even a virtual host you can customize. Check it out at: <http://youthpath.ca>

