



Acceptance for cultural diversity

remembering • developing • trying out

Documentation - Short Version

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1. Editorial

Searching is a process and dialogue is a process.

The project „acceptance for cultural diversity - remembering, developing, trying out“ was a 2 year long European dialogue about acceptance for cultural diversity and methods for promoting it. The participants in this dialogue were social educators, teachers and multipliers from four European countries, who prepare and conduct adult education programs in state institutions and in non-government organizations.

The contexts of the organizations involved differed considerably with respect to the cultural diversity brought about by immigration, as well as in the basic structural conditions for their commitment. It was also recognized that the immigration of human beings from other countries is only one factor having an effect on processes of social change to more pluralism and diversity.

The dialogue took on different forms. It took place face-to-face in workshops and transnational meetings, as well as in electronically supported meetings via Skype and blog. From these meetings a network of communication, of learning and search, took shape .

We looked for the conditions for the success of learning processes from which the acceptance for diversity can develop.

You may find details about project structure and the results here. The project website provides further views <http://accepting-cultural-diversity.eu>. There you will also find detailed documentation in the languages German, Polish and Romanian.

Dr. Monika Treber (project direction)



III. Acceptance is more than Tolerance

Acceptance and tolerance are attitudes which are urgently needed in societies characterized by diversity. However, they are not identical.

*“**Accepting**”, characterized as an active procedure, means to approve of, esteem, assume; on the other hand, “**tolerance**” indicates a merely passive acceptance. There is a divide between the two terms which can be closed by learning.*

What can adult education organizations do to promote an attitude of acceptance?



This question was asked by the NGO “Christian Initiative International Learning”, a registered association (CIL), in the summer of 2016 in the context of the refugee movement into the countries of the European Union. The admission of a large number of immigrants into a society is necessarily connected with the question of how acceptance for this can be gained in the population that is taking them in.

As CIL we saw ourselves challenged by the task of arranging a dialogue about winning acceptance through political education. A European dialogue, to be sure. After a European consultation in the autumn of 2016, the concept for the project developed. We realized:

The search begins ...

“Acceptance for cultural diversity – remembering, developing, trying out”

from 2017 - 2019, together with partner organizations from Austria, Poland and Romania.

We – these are:

The **Christian Initiative International Learning**, a registered association in Frankfurt/Main, as coordinating organization, in cooperation with the **Diakonischen Werk Offenbach-Dreieich-Rodgau**, Division for Refugee Work

with the partner organizations:

Evangelische Akademie, Vienna

Masovian Community Center for Advanced Teacher Training (MSCDN), Warsaw

gtwelfth association, Białystok

General Directorate for Social and Child Protection in the district Bihor, Oradea



Participants in Workshop 1

What did the project want to accomplish?

During a two-year dialogue process we exchanged practical experiences, established methods and became acquainted with concepts. We assumed three aspects are particularly important if attitudes to cultural diversity are to change: the memory of historical experiences with the admission of refugees; the experiences, made locally with a participatory procedure; and the confrontation with personal reservations (unconscious biases).

Our goal

To seek out “factors for success” in the use of participatory and historically reflected forms of work for the promotion of acceptance.



Workshop in Warsaw – encounter without words ... and many questions

The process and the procedure

Four elements were decisive in the project’s process: the learning groups, three European workshops, a semi-public blog for the exchange of evaluations of the learning groups, and the transnational meetings of the project team.

The Learning Groups

Each partner organization formed a learning group consisting of 3 - 9 persons. The members of the learning groups are active as teachers, social workers, educators and volunteers in the refugee work of the partner organizations.

The Workshops

In the course of the year 2018 three European workshops were held, which took up the aspects “participation”, remembrance work and anti-discrimination. The learning groups sent 3 - 7 members to each workshop. There were also day guests. In the workshops the participants presented their own work experiences and concepts, and they tested methods of biographical work and anti-discrimination work.

Blog

Between the workshops the members of the groups met for the pre- and follow-up work and placed their evaluations in a (semi-public) blog. The contributions in the blog, translated into the languages German, Polish, Romanian, were accessible to all members of the learning groups.

The Transnational Meeting of the Project Direction Team

The coordinators of the partner organizations met personally in connection with the workshops, and for a longer analysis meeting in Oradea. Between the meetings they consulted among themselves in regular “Skype conferences”.

Comments about the motivation for the participation

Warsaw

“The MSCDN conducts training courses and projects designed to encourage teachers and directors to think about topics such as tolerance and the acceptance of cultural diversity. It was simply our motivation to join the project in order to strengthen our abilities and our knowledge about activities and strategies for anti-discrimination work, and the inclusion of children/young people and their families into the life of a pluralistic society.”

Vienna

“In the quality network of the working group of the “Evangelische Bildungswerke”, to which the Evangelische Academy Vienna belongs, we committed ourselves to promote the plurality and communicative ability of ethical convictions and cultural ways of life with educational provisions. Transnational exchange and cross-linkings are good opportunities for promoting mutual understanding and co-operation at the European level, and for exchanging new methods and approaches.”

Oradea

“We were interested in the personnel development for the work with different population groups. Multi-cultural teams will be a work form found ever more frequently in the future. Various work styles, which show up, for instance, in problem solution strategies, in dealing with time, or in discussion management, must first be recognized and then co-ordinated.”
(General Directorate for Social and Child Protection in the district Bihor, Oradea)

Białystok

“Our original motivation as gtwelfth association was to develop international cooperation with organizations which have a similar activity profile as we do: human rights, sustainable development, an equality perspective, anti-discrimination work, intercultural education and acquisition of a European perspective, not only locally as was the case previously. As a small, local NGO in Białystok with several years of experience, we also wanted to compare and analyze our present context and our status as NGO with other such organizations. We also wanted to gain experiences in the work with immigrants and refugees.”

Acceptance for Culture

remembering • developing •

PROJECT-TEAM

for steering, moderation & evaluations;
coordinators from the
partner organizations

Work

A welcome
is n

Work

Euro
remer

8 - 10 June 2018
Vienna

Learning group
Warsaw

Work

Anti-disc
repa

Learning group
**Frankfurt/
Dreieich**

Learning
group
Vienna

Cultural Diversity

trying out

Workshop 1

Sharing culture
more

24 - 28 January
2018

Neu-Isenburg/
Dreieich

BLOG

for questions,
commentaries
& feedback

Workshop 2

European
membering

15 - 18
November
2018
Warsaw

SKYPE

for communication
of the project team

Workshop 3

Discrimination
workshop

Learning
group
Oradea

Learning
group
Białystok



Conditions for Success – recommendations

Participation, memory work and anti-discrimination work are aspects of the promotion of acceptance of cultural diversity.

If the promotion of acceptance is to succeed, these three aspects must be given special consideration. The experiences and evaluations from the project show that there are significant aspects which are connected on several levels of shaping the learning processes:

The level of the instructors

Participation is connected with a certain attitude on the part of the instructors. They should esteem those whom they want to win over for an accepting and open attitude. This includes being able to adapt themselves to the different groups in the population and to work flexibly and methodically. The skills and resources of the learners must be considered and included. The instructors should consider themselves as co-learners, and as models for a participatory attitude. They need patience for small steps and the capacity to deal with setbacks.

The success of memory work and biographical narrative depends in a special way on a methodically secure environment. Instructors must ensure this through a respectful attitude that is encouraging and empathetic toward narration. Their task is to make certain that different perspectives can be heard and that no evaluations are made. They should be able to deal with the emotions of the participants and protect the boundaries of therapy.

Instructors in anti-discrimination work are aware of their own prejudices and ready to question themselves and change. Their attitude communica-

Workshop 1 – perceptions and encounters

tes awareness and respect for different perspectives. They create learning situations which help to recognize mechanisms of discrimination. In doing so they attend to the avoidance of shaming and guilt assignment, and are sensitive for released emotions.



Level of the learners

Important preconditions for those to be won over for the acceptance of diversity are: curiosity, interest and learning readiness. These must be applied in such a way that one's own change can be experienced positively in a process. It is important to offer opportunities for participation in activities, to express one's own opinion, and generally to make easy access possible. There must be room for expressing displeasure, disappointments and fears. Voluntariness and tolerance for error are of great importance.

Sharing biographical experiences can succeed if the learners have the courage to open themselves and dive into (their) past. Interest and appreciation for biographical knowledge promote the readiness for narration.

Voluntariness, openness and the motivation to change oneself are important preconditions for anti-discrimination work. If confidence develops, openness for other aspects and self-criticism can grow.

Level of basic environment

Openness for cultural diversity requires a stable environment of a structural and material kind. Structural conditions are: democratic relationships, professional support during the clarification of conflicts, clear, legally secured scope for participation, flexibility for necessary adjustments.

Material preconditions for sharing are the securing of basic needs and at least the minimal financial support of structures and measures, also on a national level.

In particular biographical narration requires time and a relaxing, inviting environment. In a group everyone should have the opportunity for narra-

tion. Linguistic barriers are respected and overcome, language that is simple, but not reductionist, is used, as are language intermedia-ries. If the participants feel safe, an open dialogue can develop.

For anti-discrimination work a setting in which there is no pressure is necessary, one in which experiences which can be linked to information are learned.



Conversations with residents of the shared accommodation

Level of the methods

Learning settings for the promotion of the acceptance of cultural diversity need a high measure of methodical diversity. They should take up situations, contexts and needs felt by target groups flexibly and variably, and make holistic learning in the sense of learning and experiencing possible. They should make diversity in expression possible and be sensitive for culturally varied settings and habits. It is important that they are based on attitudes and convictions.

The learning methods should support putting what is told into historical connections. At the same time, what is told should experience an appreciation as the other side of the official historical narrative, as the history of women, minorities, discriminated groups (Herstory). Structuring and moderating interventions should not disturb the flow of the narration. They consider individual relevance, the diversity of the group and the authority of the one who is narrating.

Methods for empathizing with the situation of a person discriminated against are important. Learning methods should be activating, simple and not invasive, but stimulate reflection.

Dr. Monika Treber, overview and editing

Are the terms *instructor* and *learner* “correct”?

This question came up again and again in the intensive analysis discussions. We decided to use the terms, nevertheless, to make in this way clear that they present an irritation and should be analyzed. The interaction, in which the individual both teaches and learns, is surely indisputable, however, at the same time not everyone in all situations is generally teaching and/or learning. Nevertheless, we find the usage suitable for a discourse about the path to a society which accepts cultural diversity.

Impressions of the workshops







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