

ACTIVITY REPORT

SOLIDAR TRAINING ACADEMY 2016

INTEGRATION, INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Addressing challenges and opportunities in the social

services, education and training sector

6-8 JULY 2016 | ILO TRAINING CENTER, TURIN

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The Training Academy contained of six blocks, including two content and one practical inputs from experts and overall five group work sessions. Topics covered cultural definitions and awareness, social capital and societal wellbeing, work with refugees and building an inclusive society and finally summing up outcomes in video. The main objectives were to strengthen the societal work for inclusive communities, cultural understanding and cooperation and support for refugees in local levels. The practical objectives were to create a good learning environment in an interactive way and promote the exchange of experiences, good practices and networking between participants.

Wednesday 6/7/2015: Culture, cultural awareness and promotion of social capital

The first day of Training Academy was opened with SOLIDAR introduction and policy contextualization from SOLIDARs point of view. The participants were introduced to each other through a set of icebreakers and games to get to know each other in order to create a relaxing atmosphere.



The expectations of the course covered both content and atmosphere related aspects. Participants were looking forward to improve organisational skills, gain knowledge to build pathway together for social Europe and peaceful coexistence, develop fundraising strategies, learn new things, detect common challenges and be sustainable as well as get information to share with colleagues after returning home. Socially participants were looking for useful international connections, friends, exchange of ideas, being social and open as well as optimistic and hopeful.

The participants also had social and content related expertise to contribute. They had communicational and social skills, willingness to share good practices and materials, provoke discussion and express

critical point of view. Content wise they had experience in researching the social exclusion of minorities, knowledge on migration crisis, explaining the situation and challenges in their countries, elderly people expertise, legal expertise and gender studies expertise.

During the afternoon participants worked together to reflect their own cultural identities, learning intercultural dialogue related exercises and sharing ideas and experiences.

At the end of the day each participants was specifically thanked by another participant. The short anonymous collection of feedback of the day revealed that participants liked the venue, had fun, appreciated the exercises and discussion as a way to question their cultural back bags, had to think and re-think their ideas, considered the learning methods nice and effective and even found it likeable to “contaminate” their ideas with others. Finally, there was a wish to have a more formal / professional introduction round in order to learn each other’s professional positions in their organisations.

Block 1: Cultural identity and one’s cultural back bag

In the first block the group had a look into definitions of culture. The models covered e.g. Hofstede & Hofstede’s idea of cultural being mind programming as values in the core of it and then becoming visible over practices related to rituals, heroes and symbols. Also the group looked into Schwartz’s model of universal values, an ice berg model and collective identities listed by Sonja Valjus. Afterwards the participants visualised their own cultures and then combined their ideas visually.

The results

During the first exercises the participants discussed their cultural identities and what / where they

identify with. They pointed stereotypes and underlined that there are several aspects to define people. They have drawn their own cultures and then negotiated in small groups their common cultures while visualised them. After the group work there was a discussion both on how the internal negotiation happened and what kind of roles the participants had as well as on the actual idea of culture. The pictures turned out to be very different.

The first group visualised their culture as a group of characters of varying length standing behind a wall of equality and looking to the other side. Each character is different; they are e.g. restless cat person, small village inhabitant and vegetarian. With the help of openness, unity, democracy and solidarity all of them are able to see over the wall of equality – and they see income, human rights, education, health care, social justice, democracy, decent work and safety. With this picture the group highlighted their most important values and what they can help people with different attributes to gain. The group had identified that they share these aspects and thus the picture “drawn itself”.

The second group visualised their culture as an artistic setting of people standing together and supporting their close ones; their children and families. Those who are lifted by others further lift others. At the bottom of the picture the participants did draw some more national or religious symbols in order to show their roots, although the picture as a whole combines their cultures. Finally, on top of the picture the group had drawn “capitalism” in the form of a character who was attracting with money those who were lifted by others. With the setting the group explained that all of us want to provide a good life for ourselves and our families. Can a fair society be built on capitalism, they asked.

The third group draw a sort of roundabout with signs of constant movement to visualise the fact that parts of our culture are constantly changing due to

external input. These factors can be e.g. religion, physical boundaries, post / history, environment (relationships) and values. They had identified that they have some stable roots in their cultures – which is an aspect that they have in common – while most of it are constantly re-negotiated. What is that stable part or in the essence of our culture, they asked as placing a question mark in the centre of this “moving” circulation.

Block 2: Social capital and societal wellbeing

To begin with, there was a group discussion of social capital, which covered its meaning and definitions, how to find it, how to promote it and how relevant it is in a society but also for an individual to cope in a society. Then the group discussed the factors of societal wellbeing as outlined by Wilkinson & Pickett and also shortly of the meaning and methods of austerity and its alternatives. The block was finished up with the method “fish bowl”, thus those participants who were active in discussion were changing freely and spontaneously. Additionally, there was a secretary making notes of relevant outcomes of group discussion. Before the common discussion the participants had a short discussion in small groups to remind each others of the major topics of the day.

The results

The group discussion varied from culture to social capital and how to promote it; how to better understand and support each other. The solutions / good practices included several comments on diversity and being able to see multiple cultures in a culture rather than making narrow categories – important to rethink the bonds. People are not (only) products of dominant cultures. Identities are personal but also collective. Since families and childhood is a basis for everyone but families do not support all their members, there was question on

how to help families to be more open and supportive.

Collective emancipation must be created constantly! That can be promoted e.g. creating space for collective actions and mutual learning. One can start with mutual stuff and build a platform. Such cooperation requires trust but also creates trust. One needs to trust in order to create it.

In order to invite others to join, support local communities and to communicate in a respectful way with empathy it is good to start with oneself. One needs to trust but also to appreciate of having what one has; to be happy. Next goal to everyone is to think good of others.

Thursday 7/7/2015: Building inclusive societies and presenting output in videos

The day started with icebreakers and interactive summary of the previous day. The day focused on working with service provision to refugees, migrants and other vulnerable groups presented by Maurice Claassens from SOLIDAR. Afterwards the group worked more with intercultural learning provided and facilitated by Emilija Gagrčin, EFIL's Training and Intercultural learning Advisory Body.

After the two sessions the group had a round of examples of next steps and plans in their organisations. The participants formed in the exercise literally a net while sharing their organisations plans. Such formed two major patterns. Firstly, organisations work directly with refugees. Plans are based yet on new needs analysis and also future activities include offering platforms to attend local activities as well as helping with language and societal skills. Secondly, many organisations have identified locals negative

attitudes towards refugees. Therefore there are projects and attempts for raising awareness through information, knowledge and campaigns in order to change attitudes.

In the afternoon participants attended a video tool workshop and ended up the day with working on with their own videos to be presented the next day.

Block 1: Service provision to refugees, migrants and other vulnerable groups: obstacles and challenges in daily activities, local experiences and good practices / Maurice Claassens / SOLIDAR

Maurice Claassens introduced more of SOLIDAR's work with regard to services provision. He begun with the context: only 1.5 million refugees have recently arrived to Europe, that about one (1) percent of the amount of inhabitants. 67% or the arrivals are young (14-34 years old) and suffering of high risk of poorness. The basic idea of SOLIDAR is that accessible and quality services are basic human right to everyone. Thus major goals for SOLIDAR's work are to promote fair share (work and paying taxes are not enough; also service, decent working conditions are required) and change of austerity ideology in Europe. At the moment as much as 40 % or European inhabitants are becoming poorer, thus we talk about a huge trend. Unemployment does not cover the trend of becoming poorer, but also the decisions of freezing the salaries during the last 10-15 years and forced entrepreneurship. At the same time Europe is lacking a goal oriented and sustainable refugee politics. Afterwards the participants were set up for group work in order to share experiences of services provided to refugees, obstacles faced and major success factors.

The results

Participants had experience of amount of various services. There is plenty of experience of projects and networks to support integration. There is

informal training and education together with refugees, training of volunteers, language training etc. Participants also had experience of very practical work such as sharing clothes, food, diapers etc. Additionally, participants also had experience of lobbying and campaigns for raising awareness.

Obstacles that participants and their organisations had faced covered policy issues with governments not willing to properly guarantee resources for integration work. Participants also identified fears and even xenophobic and racist attitudes among their countries and communities leading to lack of empathy as we all as lack of historical knowledge and part (regarding times when other nations needed help). At the back of the whole trend are unequal global economy and climate change. There are also crimes involved, such as human trafficking.

Success factors that the participants identified begun with the point that service needs to be provided together with the refugees / any other target group instead of for / to them. Success factors also covered integration and intercultural training as a two way street in the sense that locals as well as prior refugees needs to be involved and organisers need to be flexible. The success points also included a variety of services for various needs (e.g. language classes turned out to be more effective with multiple methods, like singing songs with the new language). Most relevant for the needs analysis and successful service provision is that all the parts meet around the same table. Participants shared examples of activists with negative prejudices becoming contributors after getting to know newcomers.

Block 2: Intercultural learning / Emilija Gagrčin / EFIL's Training and Intercultural learning Advisory Body.

The workshop was very interactive and begun with "a brain stimulation exercise" and then went on with discussion as of what is intercultural learning. To

have an idea the participants attended and exercise of estimating a short amount of time. After the exercise the group discussed as on how important is time for the participants, as persons – and whether such view is personal or cultural. Afterwards the group had another look on the ice berg model but with more details than in the previous day. There was a discussion as whether some of its aspects (on visible and invisible parts of cultures) make some irritated. That lead to the next phase of the workshop in which the participants formed a line, a continuum as to answer to four statements of the facilitator, which were:

- I am inter-culturally competent
- Intercultural competence can be learnt through reading books and visiting workshops
- If you don't know, it's better not to do anything
- Intercultural competence is dealing with others

The final part of the workshop covered discussion on failed or successful intercultural project as to recall relevant aspects to consider before and during a service provision project.

The results

In order to create a successful project in international setting / with refugees, one must identify clearly why (based on whose needs), who and to whom, when and how. After closer discussion yet relevant aspects covered the community's needs analysis, cohesive teamwork, clear goals and priorities, checking out others activities and learning from good practices of others as well as finding key persons of the relevant groups.

Finally, the together identified principles for intercultural learning are empathy, asking for clarification whenever needed, willingness to understand and accept, tolerate ambiguity and

unsecure situations, respect for oneself and others, cooperation and participation.

Block 3: Media workshop / Alessandro Vicini / CISL

Media work expert Alessandro Vicini introduced Magisto and PowToon to participants. He first presented structural aspects and key features to consider while preparing a short video presentation. The participants spent the last part of the day preparing their own presentations in small groups or pairs. The last working hours of the day Vicini was supporting participants own video productions to be presented the next day.

Friday 8/7/2015: Local strategies and final conclusions

The day started with icebreakers and summary of the previous days. Afterwards the participants presented their short videos. The videos covered course outcomes, cultural identity discussion, raising awareness regarding refugees, inviting refugees to activities and locals to awareness trainings.

The day went on with discussing local strategies for inclusive communities. The day and the whole training was finished up with feedback discussion, self-reflective feedback exercise and filling out anonymous feedback forms.

The self-reflective feedback discussion revealed that many participants were happy with the learning environment during the training and many felt that they were part of the group of sharing. In the flipchart paper of feedback comments the comments of the second and third day participants wrote that the training provided them with “food for thought” on many interesting topics and the value graph presentation and discussion was very much valued. “The more I think, the better I think”, wrote

somebody. Additionally, the participants appreciated Turin as course venue and wished there was more time for the training. However, some participants would have liked to have a more formal presentation of the participants and liked to receive hard copies of presentations in order to make more effective notes. Also somebody apologised their language skills.

Block 1: Local strategies to support up-holding democracy

The participants discussed societal moral, values and values based on model of moral development by Kohlberg and universal value model by Schwartz. Moral discussion begun with Kohlbergs classical complex question of Heinz and lead to discussion of levels of moral development – and how to promote moral behaviour in communities. Schwartz’s model of universal values was discussed through examples of personal value preferences as well as in relation to current value research. Additionally, there is evidence that people are well while in an environment in which they can live according to their values. Afterwards the group discussed on basic needs in value level and the importance of providing certain security to everyone.

Dialogue was discussed based on participants ideas and experiences. The first half ended with Kari Traa’s #NoTrollCanBreakMe –clothing collection video with the point of emancipating troll victims through making hate messages and their senders visible in clothing. The video was watched and discussed in the context of dialogue and its limits.

To open up the part after the break the participants got to see the #StopTheWedding video promoting Plan Norways campaign against child marriages. Finally, the participants watched Bernie Sanders campaign video I Can’t Breathe. We discussed of dialogue, emotional communication and importance of positive identification in raising awareness campaigns.

Acceptance and toleration were discussed trough an exercise in which the participants filled out their own zones for valuing, accepting, tolerating and not tolerating and then shared those ideas with others till the extent that they preferred. Finally they identified strategies to move something from toleration zone to acceptance zone and from hard to tolerate –zone to toleration.

Alongside with the discussion of tolerance and acceptance there was a table to differentiate levels that affect migrants position in a society. Levels begin with individual (e.g. human and social capital) and continue all the way to structural (e.g. migrant policy and societal norms) aspects.

The results

Dialogue comes back to points of listening and respecting others but also oneself. Dialogue allows sharing in a safe environment. Also the point of “positive discrimination” was discussed in the sense that sometimes dialogue requires understating of certain unequal structures that participants attribute to which end up limits the discussion. For example males become less distracted then females in general, therefore in certain situation it might be needed to limit their spaces. Furthermore, there are various other aspects in addition to gender that should be taken into account when aiming to have a dialogue.

Acceptance and tolerance can’t always be achieved, the participants pointed out. However, they concluded that when there are issues / aspects / people which it would be good to move our attitude from toleration to acceptance, empathy and placing oneself to the position of others is the best way. There are dialogical ways to promote that which one should apply as effectively as possible.