



CASE STUDY



Open up the borders of our minds (OUTBOOM project)

The project was financed by the EU and implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action 1. The first goal of this project is to invite youth workers to reflect upon their own competences and attitudes towards migrants and refugees.

The second goal is to return home with stronger skills to fight discrimination, intolerance and hostile attitudes towards migrants and refugees in the local communities of the partner countries.

The project included participants from six European countries – Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain and Hungary.

A total of 24 youth workers from all the above-mentioned countries took part in the project



The Institute for Social Integration (ISI) was founded in 2002. Among its founders are leading experts – sociologists, political scientists, psychologists, jurists, diplomats, economists and journalists. They are all united by their desire to address the problems related to integration and inclusion in Bulgarian society, to promote democracy, and to fight against social and economic inequality, alienation and social vulnerability.





SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

The project was financed by the EU and implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action 1. The first goal of this project is to invite youth workers to reflect upon their own competences and attitudes towards migrants and refugees.

The second goal is to return home with stronger skills to fight discrimination, intolerance and hostile attitudes towards migrants and refugees in the local communities of the partner countries.

The project included participants from six European countries – Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain and Hungary.

A total of 24 youth workers from all the above-mentioned countries took part in the project.

DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANISATION

The Institute for Social Integration (ISI) was founded in 2002. Among its founders are leading experts – sociologists, political scientists, psychologists, jurists, diplomats, economists and journalists. They are all united by their desire to address the problems related to integration and inclusion in Bulgarian society, to promote democracy, and to fight against social and economic inequality, alienation and social vulnerability.

ISI has experience in preparing project guidelines. Good practices have been included in many of its project guidelines. In the last project, about monitoring the elections, ISI developed a handbook for observers, to help them be more effective in their work.

Over the years, many joint projects have been carried out with the Jean Jaures Foundation (France), Westminster Foundation (UK), the Council of

Europe, Open Society Institute, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Germany), Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and the SOLIDAR network.

ISI's team consists of leading experts in non-formal learning, organising and conducting educational programmes and seminars. Furthermore, the General Assembly of the Association includes psychologists, political scientists, jurists, diplomats, economists and journalists. ISI's team has proved its experience in organising conferences, training, seminars, public forums, round tables and discussions.



PROJECT

What are the local social realities?

In 2015 Europe faced its most severe migration crisis in centuries. It is estimated that one million people – mostly Muslims – fled the war in Syria and tried to escape poverty in other countries of the Middle East and Africa and made the complicated trek across Turkey and Eastern Europe to reach Western Europe.

In the last few years more and more migrants





have headed to the European continent. This process accelerated sharply with the start of the Syrian crisis. According to different sources the number of migrants and refugees reaching Europe in 2015 increased in comparison with 2014.

In the Mediterranean region alone this number reached more than 100,000 for the first half of 2015. More than 150,000 migrants have been recorded on the European borders since the beginning of the year and the number continues to grow rapidly.

In 2015 the arrests at Bulgaria's borders increased. About 10,000 migrants were arrested at the Bulgarian-Turkish border and more than 11,000 at the border with Serbia. In 2015 9,530 persons applied for asylum in the detention facilities of the "Migration Directorate", which is run by the Ministry of the Interior. By November 2015, the authorities had detained more than 27,000 "illegal migrants".

What are the specific innovative elements in your project/service?

The project consists of three main phases.

- 30 days of preparation, consisting of desk research, reflecting on the processes in each country;
- 5 day training course in Bulgaria, and
- 45-60 days mentoring phase – applying the ideas developed during the training course under the mentorship of the trainers' team, who deliver support to the participants and answer their questions and requests, supporting and motivating their pro-active behaviour.

The most innovative element is combining the theoretical approach during the training course with its implementation in practice back in local communities after the training course both during the mentorship phase and afterwards.

What are the key characteristics of the project/service?

Target groups

24 youth workers from six different European countries. Youth workers can support local communities by changing their mindset and attitudes towards refugees, especially in countries where the number of migrants has been growing rapidly in the past few years and where explicit acts of discrimination and violence are detected in public and social media.

Principles

To promote tolerance, human rights and acceptance of differences, by using non-formal learning methods.

Drivers

The main reason for developing the project was the obvious gap between the local communities and native population and newcomers such as migrants and refugees – a gap which is has been widening for the last few years. Similar processes can be seen in all the project partners' countries. This gap leads to discrimination on several levels, including local and national. This sometimes remains hidden below the surface of publicity. ISI's team was determined to reinforce efforts and energy to work on the promotion of tolerance and fight against discrimination

Outcome

As a part of the outcomes we recognise the strengthened motivation and readiness among participants to work on this topic. For example, one of the partner organisations became motivated and applied for a new project





on the same topic. After the evaluation of the project, ISI is planning to apply for a second edition in the autumn of 2016.

Can this project be transferred to a larger context (a bigger region, the whole country, EU-wide)? If so, what is necessary to transfer it (special structures, finances, common definition of standards...)? If not, why not?

We strongly believe that the project could be transferred on a larger European scale, involving more countries (experiencing problems related to racism, discrimination and xenophobia). We can see these processes are getting more tangible. It is clear that the flow of migrants towards Europe is on a vast scale and will have a strong impact on Europe's future in the coming years. The project could contribute to a more peaceful and coherent integration and inclusion process.

As mentioned above, after successful completion of the first edition of the OUTBOOM project, ISI is considering applying for a second time, again under the Erasmus+ Programme. This would be a great opportunity for more youth workers to take part and to reflect on the processes in their own countries and on the European scale.

CONTACT

www.isi-bg.org

Stefan Georgiev
Project coordinator
Institute for Social Integration (ISI)
1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
5B, «Triaditsa», str
tel./fax: +3592 983 69 22
ifsi.bulgaria@gmail.com





solidar

Rue de Pascale 4-6
1040 Brussels
Belgium
T +32 2 500 10 20
F +32 2 500 10 30

Twitter: @SOLIDAR_EU
Facebook: SOLIDAR
www.solidar.org
solidar@solidar.org



SOLIDAR, together with our national members and partners, has developed 17 case studies in 2016, presenting innovative, effective, sustainable and tailor made models to promote social inclusion, the social economy and quality job creation by adapting a social investment approach. In their daily work, SOLIDAR members and partners anticipate new or unmet needs of socio-economically vulnerable people and empower them to actively participate in society and to access the labour market.

These case studies gather strong evidence of the social impact of the activities undertaken by our members and partners to help Member States making progress towards the achievement of the social and employment objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the implementation of the Social Investment Package.

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



This publication has been produced with the financial support of the European Union. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.