

## Chapter II                    The Rationale of the International Training Course



ORIENTATION

**Intercultural Adult Education: *Learn to celebrate diversity!***

The rationale for Intercultural Education underlying the work of ORIENTATION is developed in full in Appendix I. The course's rationale attempts to be consistent with the principles of intercultural education and seeks to give expression to them within the practical setting of a training course.

### **A. General approach and aims of the course**

#### *General approach*

The course deals with the fundamentals of an intercultural approach to adult education: it raises questions about basic terms, concepts and tools, and about their relevance in the experience and daily practice of participants.

#### *Background*

The course was developed and is facilitated by an international team of experts, adult educators, teacher trainers and course organisers. It is the outcome of a Socrates Grundtvig trans-national cooperation project which was run 2004-2006. Aim of this project was to establish a course offer that would contribute to the intercultural dimension across any adult education in Europe, in response to the reality of cultural diversity, and of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, in European societies.

#### *Intended outcomes*

The project team understands intercultural work as a cross-cutting aspect in any adult education context throughout Europe. The course therefore addresses everybody involved in adult education, whether experienced in intercultural approaches or not.

- Beginners may gain a basic understanding of essential concepts of interculturality relevant for European societies, and develop initial intercultural strategies for their practical work.
- More experienced participants may review and reflect their concepts and practices of intercultural work under the angle proposed by the seminar.



The project team decided to design the course as well for “beginners” as for “more experienced” in the intercultural field because

- In the international setting of the course and the different experiences due to the diverse backgrounds of each of the participants, we can not assume a common fundament of an intercultural approach.
- Cooperation and mutual exchange in the international setting of participants, facilitators and course organisers opens diversified perspectives on the topics for all persons involved.

Furthermore interesting contacts for future co-operation may be made. Participants will be invited to join a trans-national thematic network after completing the seminar.

#### *Course content and topics*

The course offers an intercultural approach to adult education through a concept of diversity. It follows a sociological-educational viewpoint which approaches interculturalism as a socio-political and educational perspective based on critical reflections on identity, culture and diversity.

Social reality and culture are defined as social constructions rather than naturally given or determined. So, intercultural learning aims on learning fields on the level of cognitive, experiential as well as behavioural layers in different societal conditions.

During the course participants work on

- the notions of identity and culture, self-determination, difference and equality, interaction, as essential concepts and key principles of an intercultural approach
- sources and taxonomies of diversity, and their implications for adult education institutions and adult educators
- selected intercultural competencies of an adult educator, such as cultural knowledge, communication skills, active listening, empathy, acknowledging different points of view, act as peer counsellor, generate and answer relevant questions on diversity, etc.
- a range of methods and tools which aim at raising awareness and recognising and promoting intercultural competencies among adult learners.

## **B. The main pillars of the training process**

### *International facilitation and audience*

The facilitation of the course is always carried out on the basis of equality by experienced trainers from at least two countries in Europe in order to integrate cultural perspectives. Furthermore, the international nature of course participants reflecting on the interactive and co-operative learning methods used by the facilitators is an essential pillar of the course.

### *Active methodologies*

An intercultural approach to one's own work cannot be "learned" in a cognitive way only but needs to be experienced and developed in interaction. In accordance with this principle, the training methodology developed for the course focuses on facilitating the objective-based interaction and co-operation amongst all persons involved – facilitators and participants:

Participants experience a range of experiential and reflective learning pedagogies in individual, group and pair work:

- self reflection
- simulation
- case studies
- problem solving
- reflective discussion
- action planning.

Special attention is given to involve the participants' regional backgrounds and experiences and to facilitate mutual exchange.

In the international setting of participants, facilitators and course organisers, participants experience themselves and reflect on the proposed interactive and cooperative learning methods in an intercultural process which they may consider and adapt for their own work purposes.

### *Visit to an adult education institution in the area of the course*

The programme also includes a focused visit to a local adult education centre as a way for participants to experience a piece of adult education in the region where the seminar is held and to assess the intercultural dimension of this institution.

### *Transfer*

Special emphasis is placed on the transfer of experience and learning from the course to the workplaces of participants. Guidance is provided basically through two instruments which are introduced during the course:

- the personal day-by-day journal: Participants are asked from the very first day to reflect regularly on the relevance of the course for their every day life and work,
- the action plan: Individually and in group work, participants define concrete aims and activities for the period of three months following the course.

Facilitators and organisers support post-course-activities by distinct questions via an online platform, which allows also to share further materials, experiences and thoughts within.

### **C. Target group**

The course addresses everybody working in the field of adult education:

- teachers (vocational, adult, special needs)
- teacher trainers
- careers officers, educational guides and counsellors
- inspectors
- headteachers/principals/managers of schools/organisations offering adult education
- paid or voluntary management staff in the institution/organisation
- non-teaching administrative staff
- members of students/teachers councils in adult education

### **D. Organisation**

In the view of managing a fruitful process of inter-cultural exchange and learning for the benefit of all – participants, facilitators and organisers –, a set of quality features applies also to the organisation of the course:

- training, accommodation, boarding, cultural and social activities are offered as a complete and well-coordinated package
- the package is embedded in local life and attractions of the host region
- a variety of tested appropriate promotion channels allows for composing challenging group profiles
- participants' profiles and requirements are analysed in time to adapt the package to each group
- individual support is provided before, during and after the course

The international ORIENTATION network assures the quality of organisation by a defined system of performance, evaluation and development.

## E. An outline of a model course package

The following wants to give an example of how the main elements of an ORIENTATION course might be arranged for a five training days package:

Arrival day	<p>During the day, participants from all over Europe arrive at the seminar centre or hotel where accommodation and training will take place</p> <p>Evening: Welcoming dinner</p>
1 <sup>st</sup> training day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of persons and work contexts</li> <li>• Expectations and the seminar programme</li> <li>• Basic concepts: the notion of 'Identity'</li> <li>• Basic concepts: the notion of 'Culture'</li> </ul> <p>Lunch at the seminar centre Dinner at the seminar centre/hotel, along with an organisations' bazaar where participants present their work contexts</p>
2 <sup>nd</sup> training day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key issues of an intercultural approach: 'Self-Determination'</li> <li>• Perception of diversity: the course group and participants' work environments</li> <li>• Key issues of an intercultural approach: 'Difference and Equality'</li> <li>• Issues of equality in our everyday private and work contexts</li> </ul> <p>Lunch at the seminar centre Dinner at a local restaurant</p>
3 <sup>rd</sup> training day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of a visit to a local adult education institutions</li> <li>• Focused visit to the adult education institution: observation and discussion with directors, educators and learners</li> <li>• Optional: guided city sightseeing tour, cultural visits in the region, outdoor activities, specific local activities, according to participants' wishes and to the weather.</li> </ul> <p>Lunch and dinner combined to the activity schedule and local events. During the day, participants find the time to prepare group reports on the visit to the adult education institution</p>
4 <sup>th</sup> training day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on the visit to the adult education institution</li> <li>• Key-issues of an intercultural approach: 'Interaction'</li> <li>• Challenging aspects of diversity for interaction in our social and work environment</li> <li>• The notion of 'Intercultural Competences' in adult education</li> </ul> <p>Lunch and dinner at the seminar centre</p>
5 <sup>th</sup> training day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intercultural competences in our adult education practice</li> <li>• Conclusions</li> <li>• A review of the week</li> <li>• Knowledge transfer into our everyday work: Action Planning</li> <li>• Feedback and evaluation</li> </ul> <p>Lunch at the seminar centre Dinner combined with farewell event (barbecue, party, local event ...)</p>
Departure day	Participants leave the seminar centre during the day.