

Evaluation Report

„Cultural and peer-learning approaches to integrate socio-economically disadvantaged youth and young adults with an immigrant background" project

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The GRUNDTVIG Learning Partnership for cultural peer-to-peer learning approaches proved to be a great platform for exchanging different concepts of learning amongst participating countries. Within the project, all members saw that there are many experiences all over Europe with peer-to-peer learning approaches in the field of inclusion and were able to learn about new ideas and perspectives and also about what themes other countries deal with.

This allowed the partners to get an insight into new tools on how to enhance intercultural dialogue in our respective settings and for all of us, it was an impressive process to learn about the different systems of education in Europe, about different questions of exclusion/inclusion within the different countries and about different roles NGOs play in the participating countries.

The main findings – methods of cultural peer-to-peer learning approaches, their benefits as well as challenges, case studies and advice for the interested groups or individuals have been elaborated and included in this compendium, which we hope will serve as a good guiding tool for facilitating these innovative approaches.

The method of peer-to-peer learning through cultural activities has proved to have a strong impact on young people, especially when carried out by gifted and well-trained youth like that from KinderKulturKarawane. For socially disadvantaged youth living in Europe, often having migrant background or being part of a minority, those young artists, obviously having found their destination, act as perfect role models and encourage others to find creative ways out of misery and frustration.

The main finding of the exchange of experiences in the framework of the GRUNDTVIG Partnership is that there are very different approaches to combine peer-to-peer learning with cultural forms of expression and activities in an effective way to improve the integration of socially and economically disadvantaged children and young people, minorities and youth with a migration background. The choice of the method depends on several determinants of target groups (age, gender, educational, social, economic and ethnic background), level of access to the target groups, cooperation framework (cooperation structure, participating institutions, schools, public administrations etc.), social, economic and financial conditions of the partner organization and country and especially the status and background of the peer groups or partners. The wide variety of the case studies presented in the partnership compendium show a broad spectrum of cultural approaches and methods applicable in peer-to-peer learning contexts to meet very different situations and requirements.

As the GRUNDTVIG Partnership was convinced by the project KinderKulturKarawane that a cultural approach, peer-to-peer learning and participation of youth in general are very convenient methods to foster inclusion of disadvantaged people into their societies, the main question within this European network was: Is this cultural approach on peer-to-peer learning portable to Europe and

which are the conditions to make it successful? In line with the fact that not all methods can be equally transferred to different settings, the GRUNDTVIG Partnership had to admit that the implementation of the cultural approach of peer-to-peer learning into the educational field is very dependent on the national, regional and local conditions. Inviting youth groups from Africa, Asia and Latin America for instance is an unaffordable luxury for South- and Eastern European countries. One possibility of how to spread the method of peer-to-peer learning through culture also in those countries could be to train youth from minorities or with migrant background in cultural techniques and encourage them to travel within their own countries to perform the role of multipliers. A future GRUNDTVIG Partnership could take up the initiative to focus on further exploring and developing this idea.

The GRUNDTVIG Partnership also debated the introduction of cultural peer-to-peer learning approaches to educational systems where it was clear that the main problem lies in convincing the responsible institutions, combined by the question of financing of all additional activities. Currently, core curriculum and multicultural education are two major approaches advocated. Neither of these approaches adequately addresses the problem of those minority groups who have traditionally not done well in school. The supporters of the core curriculum idea falsely assume that as a result of instituting a core curriculum, which demands higher standards, all students will perform as expected.

On the other hand, multicultural education advocates improperly design their program to focus on cultural differences in content and form. The crucial issue in cultural diversity and learning however lies in the relationship between the minority cultures and the mainstream culture. Minorities whose cultural frames of reference are oppositional to the cultural frame of reference of the mainstream culture have greater difficulty crossing cultural boundaries at school to learn.

Here an approach steps in, differing from all other suggestions presented so far, which is a combination of peer-to-peer learning methods – youth learning from each other – and a cultural nature of the activities. In this regard, what cultural peer-to-peer learning, especially in the form of the KinderKulturKarawane, brings as assets to the educational system, is the fact that it does not aim at unifying minorities with the mainstream culture – getting the minorities closer to the understanding of the majority – but making the mainstream culture “look through”, become aware and appreciate the different cultures. This approach has already changed the minds of the majority of youth it has come in contact with and now it needs to change the minds also of the majority of education administrators.

Underneath you can find a summary of the partners’ more „personal“ evaluations of the work carried out and the meetings undertaken. This part of the evaluation report is of great importance, because the approach of the individual is the substance, which makes a project, task, activity, initiative effective and inspiring. After all, individuals form the core, do the work and attend the meetings.

The submission of filled in questionnaires after each meeting was voluntary. The fact that so many questionnaires have been collected proves the great involvement of people and their sincere appreciation of the project, the other partners and the shared ideas and experiences.

Partners comments and evaluations after the first meeting in Vienna (October 2009) – 6 returned questionnaires

The main expectations prior to the meeting were related to getting to know interesting and inspiring people, with lots of great ideas to share, and with a vision for the current and future collaboration within the consortium. Everybody expected to receive abundant information about the partners and their activities regarding cultural approaches for integration. The participants expected from the project meeting to be able to develop a detailed project plan together, to have a good discussion on the project main topics, including administrative and financial management of the project. Some of the partners have been in contact before and have had established collaborative relations, but most of the group participants were meeting one or more organizations for the first time and the meeting in Vienna had to bring partners closer and make future work productive.

The meeting did indeed meet the expectations of all participants. The work and the socialization activities were excellent. The tone of the meeting was very friendly and everyone shared their experience. According to the participants the meeting clearly showed that the work under this Grundtvig partnership project would go smoothly and that it would be beneficial not only for the project target groups but also for the partners themselves.

The ideas, themes and discussions, which were most interesting and impressive to the participants were related to: different experiences of the use of non-formal educational techniques for different aims, including how they are implemented and about issues that need to be considered when working with them; possible application of different techniques in different countries as well as at local level in different particular settings; the experiences and view-points of the CEE partners brought additional interesting insight on their professional work regarding cultural approaches and peer-learning.

The motivation, which the partners took from the meeting for their work within the partnership project was closely related to the adoption and application of the concept of KinderKulturKarawan and understanding the approaches used by its “founders”, who despite difficulties with securing constant funding, are successfully carrying on with the concept; the visit of life performances additionally contributed to the higher level of enthusiasm for such practices and strengthened the understating of their relevance; agreement for development of a survey of partners activities based on a case study form presented by a representative of the FDCBPCS; motivation for development of further common projects with the partners in the field of culture and peer learning.

All participants in the meeting evaluated their participation during the meeting as quite satisfactory and deeply engaged. This was particularly important for the feedback received from the KinderKulturKarawan project, who were at that time those mostly involved with Culture and peer-learning.

The main developments concerning the common project goal has been the agreement on the blog, the conducting of regular flashmeeting, the filling in of good practice forms and future intense collaboration.

The main suggestions for the next meeting and for the future were focused on keeping up in the same engaged way, implementation of real work on the case study form, planning of new common

initiatives, receiving more information about the activities of the partners during the meeting in Bulgaria.

Partners comments and evaluations after the second meeting in Sofia (March 2010) – 8 returned questionnaires

The main expectations prior to the meeting were related to going through all points on the agenda and achievement of agreement on all issues and points included. The participants also expected to go one step further and to set concrete tasks and responsibilities in relation to the work in progress under the Grundtvig project as well as to learn even more about the practical examples of culture and peer learning activities for integration that the Grundtvig partners are carrying out. The partners expected a fruitful discussion on the project main topics, which to bring partners closer and make them more efficient in their future work together.

The meeting met everybody's expectations, since the conversations were smooth and effective. The partners appreciated very much the personal contact and the ambience of the team. The achieved agreement between all partners was also highly assessed and the meetings proved quite beneficial for the future collaboration of this consortium. Partners also appreciated the fact that they had more intense and profound conversation on content than during their previous meeting and the flashmeetings.

The ideas, themes and discussions, which impressed the participants most, were related to the presentation and subsequent discussion on the Kinder Kultur Karavane project, which represented a junction between all the organizations of the partnership. The participants were quite interested particularly in the presentations of the practical issues regarding welcoming groups from the South, the impact such inter-cultural endeavours have on the hosts and on the participants/performers, especially after their return to their home countries. Another point, which was quite interesting, was the need to integrate pre-, during and post-evaluation in all project aspects, in order for quality to be monitored and impact to be tailored. The participants were also content with the discussion about further cooperation and applications. The differences between new and old member-states were clarified and the participants were impressed how paths of good cooperation can be developed. The participants were again impressed by the CEE partners' professional work and engaged discussion regarding cultural approaches and peer-learning. It was highly appreciated that the partners decided to extend the meetings to 2,5 days in order to combine them with visits of cultural presentations and for having more time for discussions on the topics.

The motivation, which participants took from the meeting for their work under the partnership project, was related to further sharing experiences, which could be beneficial for the successful outcome of the Partnership; increased motivation and interest in bringing the good examples of other partners to the participant's own country; looking for further common initiatives on the topic; motivation of working more closely with target groups. The coordinator from Germany was particularly very motivated to prepare the next meeting in Cologne, which was going to include two visits of presentations and workshops of the KKK group BAOBAB.

The participants evaluated their participation during the workshop as quite satisfying and potentially beneficial for the group.

The main developments concerning the common goals since the previous meeting were connected with the formation of the European network for cultural and peer learning for integration, consisting of the entire project applicants – including the Danish partner SPOR Media, which was not awarded with a grant by the Danish national agency. This network set on the development of common EC applications and agreed upon the case study forms for the compendium, which was about to be developed. The Network managed to both discuss good valuable practices and also achieve a certain level of readiness for projects submissions under two different calls for proposals under EuropeAid and started the consideration of a third one under the LLP (Multilateral Projects) call for 2011. The participants were also happy with the further work on the Internet blog, the improved implementation of online flashmeetings, the improved ideas for using the case study form as a tool.

The suggestions for the forthcoming meetings and for the future were again mainly related to keeping up the good work and collaboration that the partners had been demonstrating up to that moment in the same joyous and friendly manner of communication. Among the other suggestions were to work even more on the content/practical aspects of the approaches and to be even more concrete about experiences in the partners' special fields of work.

Partners comments and evaluations after the third meeting in Cologne (Sept-October 2010) – 6 returned questionnaires

The main expectations prior to the meeting were related to the forthcoming demonstrations of cultural and peer-learning approaches put in practice as well as to the discussion of the approach, its impact and added value with the young groups. Considering that KKK performers were about to be experienced for the first time by some of the partners, the entire group expected the feedback on the presentation of the Baobab Culture Troupe with great interest.

The meeting met the participants' expectations and also raised a lot of questions and issues that could help to improve partners work for the future. The participants were happy with the openness of the discussion on the performance and approaches used by Baobab Culture Troupe. The presentation of the "Peer leaders" project was also particularly useful for understanding how young people perceive new cultures and how they think they can change social stereotypes.

The ideas, themes and discussions, which impressed the participants most, were connected with seeing the show and workshops with the cultural groups in the theatre and the school, etc. The meeting with the Baobab Culture Troupe was also liked very much, for in the beginning they were quite shy and gradually opened up. The meeting with the representatives of Ostrhauderfehn, who talked very openly about their peer learning experiences and expectations. Another important topic and discussion was the one about quality of peer learning approaches and the variety of different cultural approaches (traditional ones versus contemporary ones).

The motivation from the meeting the participants took for their work was to deepen the understanding of the impact of peer-learning approaches on youth across continents and cultures; the motivation of breaking stereotypes and showing that no matter in what cultural environment young people have grown they can enrich their knowledge and become better people and more open to the world.

The participants evaluated their own participation in the meeting as adequate, well involved, active enough and contributory for the better understanding of the practices discussed.

The main developments concerning the common goals since the previous meeting consisted in a more practically oriented approach and raising a lot of questions for understanding the diversity of cultural and peer-learning approaches. The participants also improved the concept of the final expected results and supported the ideas with practical contributions.

The main suggestions for the future were connected to involving as much as possible young peer educators in the discussions and the partnership work, to initiating a more theoretical discussion about what peer learning means and also getting more practical examples. A suggestion for the planned compendium was also the inclusion of quality recommendations for cultural peer learning and guidelines for teachers.

Partners comments and evaluations after the fourth meeting in Vienna (October 2010) – 8 returned questionnaires

The participants' expectations before the meeting were connected with: a continuation of the exchange and discussion about the practical implementation of cultural activities with special reference to the presentations and discussions with two KinderKulturKarawane groups, which were about to perform and participating during the meeting in Vienna; a discussion on the content of the compendium and the division of the topics, plus a fruitful discussion about the future of the partnership project; supporting the project with more live cases that could be discussed afterwards

The meeting did meet the participants expectations and they were all really interested in talking to the groups and exchanging opinions and ideas about their performances and stay in Europe, including challenges they encounter and expectations they have.

The ideas, themes and discussions, which impressed the participants most, were connected with: the presentations of the two KKK groups; the common discussion with members of the groups with their intentions, impressions and feedback; the possibility to compare the variations between different peer-learning groups from different continents, including in the way youngsters act and perform, and most importantly understand their role as peer educators; the discussions with the two groups – YES-Theatre from Palestine and YAURI from Bolivia – which were very interesting and came much more to the point.

The motivation, which the participants took from the meeting in Vienna was to promote and work for creating opportunities for continuation of culture and peer learning activities of the KKK kind and their spread to new countries and regions. Another motivation was to find more ways to involve target groups actively in the learning process.

Participation in the meeting and workshop was again assessed quite well. All participants felt they took active part in all activities, but the hosts from VIDC and the German partners took a leading role due to their previous experience and good contacts with the KKK groups.

The main developments concerning the partners' common goal since the previous meeting were connected with more practical experiences and better understanding of the implementation of

cultural and peer-learning approaches for all partners; more know-how about the diversity of possible approaches; defined shape of the compendium; clearer goal for the common applications, practical experience with the workshops for all; discovering new possibilities for it to be implemented in Bulgaria.

The main suggestions for the follow-up meetings and the project future were to keep the focus on the discussion about appropriate forms for cultural and peer-learning approaches for the different partner countries and their different backgrounds; to keep the discussions balanced throughout the entire meeting; to advance in the preparation of the compendium on cultural and peer-learning approaches.

Partners comments and evaluations after the fifth meeting in Bratislava (January 2011) – 8 returned questionnaires

The expectations connected to this meeting were connected with a profound discussion on the topic of KinderKulturKarawane-like practices for cultural peer learning and their applicability in the new EU countries (Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria). Also, considering the financial issues in relation with such events, the participants expected to receive some hints and ideas on how such issues could be overcome and how a successful lobbying for curricula changes for inclusion of cultural peer learning could be undertaken. Since the partners were well ahead in their efforts for elaboration of the compendium, the participants were expecting a discussion on further cooperation on EU level.

The meeting was successful with regard to meeting the participants' expectations. The discussions were considered both informative and providing ample ideas on the successful incorporation of cultural peer learning into local educational practices. The meeting also responded to the expectations for outlining future common efforts of the partnership in the direction of promotion and development of cultural peer learning approaches. Furthermore, the participants were very well prepared and the discussion was straight on the point.

The most appreciated ideas and topics discussed were again connected with the technicalities and ideas on how to integrate a KinderKulturKarawane-like approach as a regular educational activity in the practices of newer member states. The discussion about the future project the partners are going to submit to the EC was also greatly appreciated, since sustainability of activities is very important.

The main motivations from this meeting consist in future joint efforts in collaboration with the more experienced partners, especially for transferring the good KKK practice, as well as in exploring and exploiting possibilities to transfer work on this project into new projects and ideas.

The participants consider that they participated equally efficiently and are happy with the level and intensity of their involvement. This is a shared opinion.

The main developments in comparison with the period of the previous meeting consisted in projecting the deeper and more profound entry of the cultural peer learning approaches and the allocation of specific tasks to all partners. The participants consider that with their work, debates and opened themes, they managed to approach the achievement of the objectives of the partnership. An important development is also the deep mutual understanding of partners' realities and concerns.

There were no particular suggestions since the meeting in Ljubljana has been already well-planned and the agenda was agreed upon by the partners.

Partners comments and evaluations after the fifth meeting in Ljubljana (April 2011) – 6 returned questionnaires

The expectations before the meeting included the implementation of successful joint efforts for the purpose of finalization of all details concerning the compendium and other project outcomes, also clarifications and details with regard to the final project meeting in Hamburg and the final reporting of project activities.

The meeting met the participants' expectations perfectly. The consortium managed to set the specifics of the final version of the compendium, discussed all details with regard to the forthcoming closing project meeting in Hamburg in June 2011, and discussed the Concept for European Hand-Out. It has been decided for the final report to be discussed and finalized during the meeting in Hamburg.

Among the appreciated ideas, topics and discussions was the interesting discussion on the topic of cultural peer learning and what should be considered as "cultural". The exchanged opinions were very interesting and stimulating.

The motivation participants took from the meeting was connected with finalizing the compendium and bringing similar concepts back to partner countries. Participants were motivated to go on cooperating in the partnership with that broad spectrum of cultural approaches and methods applicable in peer-learning contexts to meet very different situations and requirements and to extend the network by integrating new partners.

Most of the participants evaluated their input and contributions as quite active and efficient. The participants for whom this meeting was the first had a more scientific approach to the topics concerned and offered concentrated opinion on the question of definitions of peer learning.

The main developments since the previous meeting were the finalized compendium structure, finalized allocation of pending tasks until the final project meeting, clear definitions and content of the compendium.

The main suggestions for the next and final meeting were to finalize the common framework for the concept and the compendium, to evaluate the partnership and to plan further cooperation and the extension of the network after finishing the project.

Partners comments and evaluations after the fifth meeting in Hamburg (June 2011) – 5 returned questionnaires

The expectations before the meeting were connected with evaluation of the whole project, results, products, final report as well as planning of further network cooperation.

This final meeting has again met everybody's expectations. It was both a very practically oriented working meeting and at the same a friendly exchange on what the partners have done during the last two years.

Most appreciated were the new plans and projects to apply the different cultural and peer-learning approaches in future cooperation of the network. Quite appreciated was also the discussion regarding the preparation and submission of the final report, since it was extremely useful for this forthcoming obligatory activity.

The motivation from this last meeting was to not to consider it as a last one, but to continue work on the new ideas and plans. As mentioned in comments from the previous meetings, future joint efforts in collaboration with the more experienced partners are placed in a high position in the list of priorities, especially for transferring the good KinderKulturKarawane practice.

Participation was evaluated as quite satisfactory. All participants supported the evaluation process and contributed to the new projects and plans with own ideas.

As a main development since the previous meeting can be outlined the final evaluation, which showed the efficiency and quality of the results of the partnership process.

The main suggestion, shared by all, was the wish for the possibility for a follow up.

Final comments:

The project meetings presented an excellent opportunity for the partners to work on a topic very dependent on communication, exchange and interaction. The expectations expressed and the manner in which the consortium efforts effectively responded to them gave us strong belief in the success of our collaboration. The motivation for future efforts and the sincere interest in the numerous topics and ideas discussed points out to the fact that the partnership shared similar values from the mere start of the project and is now at its end with an even stronger and clearer idea of how to continue dedicated work in connection with these common values. The participants' satisfaction with their personal influence and level of participation and involvement during the meetings and during the running work under the project is a proof of the personal satisfaction with the achieved results. Thus the project is considered to have achieved its objectives and to have placed the grounds for a fruitful further future joint efforts of the organizations and individuals participating in it.

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