



Empowering Facilitators for Active Citizenship through the Erasmus+ Programme

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The report focuses on the ECMI involvement in the Erasmus+ project “3E to 3I: Exchanging-Empowering-Engaging to Increase-Innovate-Include”, led by the Lisbon-based non-governmental organization SPIN. Presenting the project aims, implementation steps and the outcomes, the report also highlights ECMI Trainings Unit and relevance to the similar Erasmus+ activities.

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1. Project summary

The project “3E to 3I: Exchanging-Empowering-Engaging to Increase-Innovate-Include” was an initiative of SPIN - Spin Association for the Exchange, Training and Cooperation among People, funded by the European Commission within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme. The project leaders took into consideration the current situation in terms of youth participation in Portugal and the target countries, specifically:

- Youth organizations working on participation and inclusion are looking for more effective initiatives and creative educational tools to attract young people.
- Youth democratic participation at the EU level is still underdeveloped; the majority of young people are unaware of the impact they could have to change society, while others

are unable to “read” the reality and take part in it.

- Youth work has less recognition than it should have and in many countries youth organizations are not seen by the traditional political actors as key stakeholders in the social and political arena.

The objectives of the project “3Eto3I” were based on the identified gaps, specifically:

- to improve the quality of non-formal education (NFE) activities by developing and testing innovative training and learning tools for more effective and inclusive youth initiatives;
- to support the professional development of those working in training and youth organizations by exchanging best practices and creating new educational tools able

to attract and effectively involve young people through a participatory and peer-review approach;

- to enhance transnational cooperation within youth organizations having different expertise, and to create a trustful and long lasting network of youth workers with high training standards jointly created through the seminar and assessed through the training course;
- to broaden the understanding of youth practices and increase the recognition and the international dimension of youth workers' roles by developing high quality mobility and networking experiences and disseminating their outcomes through Open Educational Resources;
- to promote active citizenship and stimulate the participation of young people in policy-making initiatives enabling them to behave as active and informed citizens;
- to promote inclusive growth by raising a sense of initiative and positive self-awareness among disadvantaged young people involving them in innovative, peer, cooperative and learner centered pedagogical dynamics.

II. Phase 1

The first phase of the project took place between 9 and 16 March 2015 and was attended for the ECMI by Zora Popova and Oana Buta. The seminar took place in

Lisbon and involved 20 participants, two from each partner organization.

The seminar aimed to explore the topics of social inclusion and active citizenship under different points of view and to share the know-how of partner organizations in such fields.

The seminar, as clarified by the first part of the project title (3E), envisioned to:

- Exchange experience, tools and best practices;
- Empower trainers with new NFE training tools for professional development;
- Engage youth organizations in a coordinated effort towards the modernization, internationalization and recognition of youth work.

The main part of the Seminar was the presentation of best practices and the sharing of innovative NFE activities regarding inclusion and active citizenship followed by peer-review sessions to assess the effectiveness and attractiveness of each presented tool.

With the tools and activities presented in mind, the group then designed together a new training module which was implemented and tested during the second phase of the project. In order to achieve the goals of the seminar, each partner organization prepared activities aimed at raising awareness about active citizenship and inclusion. The activities were carried out in the seminar, in order for them to be evaluated and refined by the participants. The contributions covered a wide range of methods and activities, including among others theatrical and multimedia activities, treasure hunts, and Capoeira. The ECMI's

representatives proposed a simulation game on decision making, which was well received by both the organizers and the participants. This simulation game aims at understanding how issues are selected for the political agenda and how governments might decide on their stance and actions towards them, as well as when and how actors of the public might raise their voices and influence these decisions.

Each of the activities was followed by a reflection and feedback session in which the participants shared their experience with and assessment of the activity and gave feedback as to how the method could be adjusted and improved in order to reach its aims.

Several of the activities were developed further with the feedback received during the seminar and implemented in the second phase of the project.

III. Phase 2

The second phase of the project was dedicated to the implementation of the methods proposed and improved during the first phase in a Training Course over 7 days with 20 participants. The Training Course took place from 7 to 14 October 2015 in Lisbon and was attended for the ECMI by Tamari Bulia and Sonja Wolf.

The aims of the Training Course were to:

- explore the topics of social inclusion and active citizenship,
- empower the young people engaged in youth organizations with new

tools and competences to promote inclusive growth and youth participation in democratic life,

- increase the quality, the effectiveness and the attractiveness of the youth workers' activities,
- innovate the inclusion and active citizenship initiatives of the youth organization, and
- include more young people in the society providing them with new tools and a strong motivation to become active and responsible citizens.

The Training Course included a large number of activities, as well as a visit to the Council of Europe's North-South Centre and an NGO fair in Estoril, just outside of Lisbon. After each activity a short reflection session was held, in which the participants either shared their thoughts and feelings about the activity or quietly reflected upon them and summarized them in a short comment that was posted on their "Facebook wall" (a poster hung up in the room). The activities and their outcomes were summarized on flipchart sheets and hung up in the seminar room, so the participants could go back and reflect at any time. The week was divided into three blocks in which the activities were structured: group building and introduction of the topic, personal experiences, and global perspectives. The first block included many games to get to know each other and to build up confidence and trust among the group members. This phase of group building was crucial in order to include all

participants as much as possible and motivate them to contribute to the training. The second part of this first block included a World Café based discussion about different aspects of active citizenship and inclusion. The second block started on the second day of the TC and included on that day the Two Tribes game, in which the group is divided in two and both groups receive different instructions and have to find a solution. It also included the Blind Squares game, in which the group is divided into smaller groups of 6 people and have to form a square out of a rope while being blindfolded. The next day included the study visit to the North-South Center, during which the participants learned about the ways in which the Center supports youth work in Europe and its neighboring states and the visit to the NGO fair on active citizenship, during which the participants talked to local NGOs and learned about their work. Day 4 started with the Newspaper activity, in which the participants exchanged experiences from their own work and tried to find the commonalities and differences between them. The third block started on Day 5 and included the simulation game on decision making proposed by the ECMI during the first phase of the project. Day 6 was filled with theatrical activities, in which the participants were sensitized about forms of power and domination and the scale that these can take. Day 7 started with a treasure hunt, in which the participants interacted with the community in which Spin is located. The

day ended with a self-assessment and evaluation session and finalized the training.

IV. Partner organizations and participants

The project covered 10 target countries, gathering one partner organization from each. The ECMI represented Germany and was joined by partners from Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, the Czech Republic and Sweden:

1. SPIN - Spin Association for the Exchange, Training and Cooperation among People is a Lisbon-based Portuguese non-governmental organization aiming at the promotion of international mobility projects for young people, interculturality, participation and active citizenship. Further details at: <http://www.spin.pt/english/>
2. CEIPES - International Center for Promotion of Education and Development is an international, non-profit, independent organization based in Palermo, Italy. CEIPES is active in European and International levels in the field of Youth and Adult Education and works on topics such as peace, equality, diversity, human rights, democracy and active participation, respect for the environment, social integration, and interculturalism. Further details at: http://ceipes.org/?page_id=2276
3. SYNCRO – Synergy Croatia is a Zagreb-based non-governmental

organization active in the field of non-formal education, personal development and international cooperation with the aim of supporting and increasing the quality of life by empowering individuals to become proactive. Further information at: <http://www.synergy-croatia.com/en>

4. Socialna akademija - Institute for Education, Research and Culture is an NGO based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. With the aim to promote intercultural dialogue, civil engagement, dignity, it is active in implementing youth projects. Further details at: <http://socialna-akademija.si>
5. S4YD - Support for Youth Development is a Romanian youth NGO based in Cluj-Napoca. The mission of the "Support for Youth Development" association is to stimulate and sustain active, civic and responsible youth participation to the educational, social, cultural and economic environment of communities in which they live. Further information at: <http://s4yd.ro>
6. The Children and Youth Center – based in Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria is a municipality initiative, devoted to formal and non formal education for youth. Further information at: <http://dmcdimitrovgrad.com/En>
7. Asociación Gantalcalá is based in Dos Hermanas, Spain and is a non-profit organization of European dimension whose mission is to contribute to the development of a

participative, tolerant and supportive society, through education, culture and social inclusion. Further information at: <http://www.gantalcala.org/index.htm?lang=en>

8. Tmelník is a youth NGO based in Mělník, the Czech Republic. Focusing on personal development and education of youth in a community, the organization organizes various debates, workshops and study trips. Further information at: <http://tmelnik.cz>
9. Youth In is a youth community organization based in Malmo, Sweden. The main focus of the organization is youth empowerment, to provide people with self-confidence, motivation and to encourage them to use their talent, knowledge and creativity. Further information at: <http://youthin.org>

Participants of the project during the first phase were senior staff members or key resource persons representing the partner organizations. However, during the second phase, partners on a basis of their interest and background in active citizenship and youth work selected the participants in each target country. Specifically, the aim within the project was to gather young people committed towards inclusion and active citizenship, having volunteering experience or a strong connection with their sending organization in order to act as multipliers later on. The participants were not required to already have competences or experience as a trainer/facilitator as the idea was to

provide them with new tools to act in such way.

V. Further steps

As Phase 3 of the project, the project leaders are developing a Handbook for Youth Workers on Inclusion and Active Citizenship. The Handbook will be a collection of all of the best practices and training tools presented during the seminar, as well as all the materials used during the training course.

The Handbook will aim to be used as a tool-kit for future training events and youth initiatives carried out the partner organizations. The Handbook will be disseminated online and promoted by all the project's partner organizations.

VI. Outcomes

Following the initial aims and objectives of the project, its outcomes can be evaluated in several categories:

Development of Methods

The trainings have resulted in the development of new methods for youth initiatives and training involving young audiences. The methods were tested throughout the project activities and adjusted according to the feedback of the participants. The methods will be published in a Handbook and shared to the partner organizations, as well as wider audiences online.

Intercultural exchange

The project gathered participants from 10 different countries, thus creating a culturally diverse atmosphere and enabling discussion of the topics from different perspectives. The diversity of the group also encouraged sharing different types of experiences on similar issues. As the participants spent several days working closely together in a friendly atmosphere, the team activities also stimulated removal of stereotypes.

In addition to the cultural differences, the participants were from different professional backgrounds, which enabled more fruitful discussions and exploring the themes of the trainings in depth from various standpoints.

Partnership building

The project brought together 10 organizations as partners through the implementation process. During the first phase, senior staff members of the organizations took part in a seminar, ensuring partnership building and sharing expertise on training methods and active citizenship. During the second phase, participants were selected from target countries by the partner organizations, many of them working in the area of youth development and actively engaged in NGOs in their countries or at European level. The training activity gave them a platform for presenting their work and networking with

other participants. During the second phase, the group of participants visited the NGO Fair, where over 150 Portuguese NGOs or Portuguese representations of international NGOs were present. This also created a space for networking and partnership building.

Raising awareness and promotion of active citizenship

The project also aimed to raise awareness on youth participation and active citizenship and promote it in target countries. For this purpose, the participants and the partner organizations not only shared experiences among each other, but also disseminated information about the project with their contacts. The training not only aimed to discuss the issues of active citizenship, but also to equip the participants with proper tools for passing knowledge on to others through new initiatives and training events.

7. The ECMI Training Unit and the ECMI as an Erasmus+ project partner

The ECMI has a long-standing experience in teaching and training. The ECMI Training Unit currently offers training modules in various areas of minority protection and minority issues. In addition to the ECMI project and related trainings (such as: in regional offices in Kosovo and Georgia, within the frameworks

of the ECMI Eastern Partnership Programme) that are tailor-made for certain target groups, the ECMI currently offers on a regular basis the ECMI Annual Summer School and the European Minority Regime Seminar at the University of Southern Denmark and Europa-Universität Flensburg. In training events organized by the ECMI team, both traditional and non-formal educational methods are used. Academic lectures and presentations delivered by ECMI researchers involve traditional methods of teaching, while seminars and trainings are conducted with interactive non-formal methods.

The ECMI has been involved in Erasmus+ projects throughout the past year, being a partner within the projects and contributing with logistical support (such as: selection of participants from Germany) or with expertise on teaching methods and minority issues. ECMI involvement in Erasmus+ projects included:

The youth exchange project "Raise your Voice" in cooperation with YouNet - an Italian NGO based in Bologna (lead partner) and other partners from Ireland, Georgia and Armenia. The general aim of the project being to promote active citizenship and empowerment of youth, it also aimed to support youth social inclusion in society through intercultural learning and non-formal education. Based on three aspects - intercultural exchange, knowledge sharing and promotion of active citizenship, the focus topics of the programme were the role of media in conflicts and rural life of young people. The ECMI supported the project implementation by acting as a sending organization from Germany. Further

information can be found in ECMI Report #63 on A Youth Exchange Project “Raise your Voice”.

The ECMI acts as a partner in two Erasmus+ projects on ‘Fighting Right Wing Populism’. The lead partner being CRISP Berlin, the project also involved partners from Macedonia, Ukraine, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Hungary, Romania and Greece. The first project aimed on developing a simulation game as a method to conduct trainings on the topic of right-wing populism, while in the follow-up project the method was tested in different regions of Europe. For further details on the project, please visit: <http://www.crisp-berlin.org/>

The ECMI team will use the interactive teaching methods developed throughout the Erasmus+ project in future training activities, in addition to being interested in being a partner organization to the upcoming projects relevant to ECMI aims and working areas.



Exploring a method: Theater of the Oppressed (Photo: Spin)



Press issues drafted by the group (Photo: Spin)



Intercultural evening: Romanian desk (Photo: Spin)



The group visited the CoE North-South Center in Lisbon to learn about their activities and how they contribute to active citizenship and youth work. (Photo: SPIN)

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