



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Grundtvig – Learning partnership

## LEARNING PROCESS IN THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

### UNITY IN DIVERSITY:

### Living, Learning and Working in a Diverse Society

Funding code: 2011-1-DE2-GRU06-07803

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# 1 | Introduction

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In 2001/2002 the education ministers of the EU already defined the targets of the European cooperation in education. They agreed on a long term work program for general and vocational education. In May 2009 the EU education ministers decided on the strategic framework for the European cooperation in general and vocational education (ET 2020), that will structure the work in the EU until 2020.

“ET 2020” has four strategic aims:

1. Realization of lifelong learning and mobility
2. Improving of quality and efficiency of general and vocational education
3. Fostering of justice, social cohesion and active citizenship
4. Promotion of innovation and creativity – including entrepreneurial thinking – on all levels of general and vocational education

The implementation of actions is often supported by the program for lifelong learning. The program shall promote the exchange, cooperation and mobility between the systems of general and vocational education in the European Union, so that they will stand out as a worldwide quality reference<sup>1</sup>.

To learn from each other and together is one of the central aspects of this program.

Youth, elderly persons, migrants, disadvantaged, employees, employers – teachers and learners – all benefit on different levels from the partnership activities in the program. The joint work in European projects contributes to an extended comprehension of the European community in which we live. All involved persons learn to understand differences and commonalities of the cultures and at the same time to respect the diversity of a multicultural society. They develop a feeling of a bigger European education identity as well as a deeper connection to a common European ideal.

The activities promote the motivation to learn new languages, to build up new partnerships and to develop learning for living.

The cooperation with European partners is part of the tradition and culture of the European partners in the learning partnership from Scotland, Spain and Germany. Major part of their cooperation is the transfer of innovations in education and the exchange of experiences from the practical fields of general, further and vocational education.

Development of competencies, new learning cultures, lifelong learning, self-organized learning, quality assurance, diversity in the pedagogical praxis, learning in the working process or modularization are only a few of the ambitious concepts and models, that are discussed and processed with partners in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> BESCHLUSS Nr. 1720/2006/EG DES EUROPÄISCHEN PARLAMENTES UND DES RATES vom 15. November 2006

## 2 | Learning process in the Grundtvig learning partnership „Unity in Diversity“

### Proposal and aim of the project

Partners from Germany, Spain and Scotland work together in the project. The coordination is taken care of by the Innovationtransfer and Research Institute in Schwerin.

The fundamental approach of the learning partnership is to exchange experiences and findings in dealing with diversity, especially concerning the transfer of skills and promotion of competences during social integration of women, seniors, persons with disabilities and migrants. This is done against the background of demographic change and the development of additional human resources.

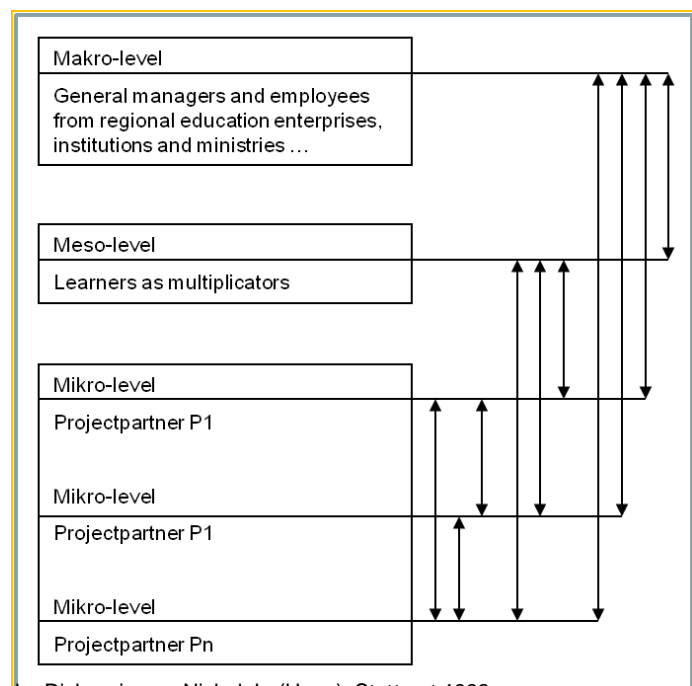
The concrete aim of the partnership is “learning from each other and together”, the common use of and the transfer of innovative methods and instruments, that are developed and used in the different European countries in order to integrate learners, which are multiple disadvantaged, in the society and in working life. It is very likely, that on this basis new contributions to the influence of diversity on learning processes will emerge.

### Principles and methodological approach in the learning partnership

In order to learn from each other and together the basic principle and methodological approach of the project is the dialogue.

According to Bohm the dialogue is a new variety of talk. It is not only about exchanging arguments, it is about broaden the horizons. It is a chance to encounter new things, not a guarantee to keep on old things<sup>2</sup>.

The dialogue in the learning partnership is happening on different levels and in interactional structures<sup>3</sup>, as shown in the graphic.



<sup>2</sup> Bohm, D.: Der Dialog. Das offene Gespräch am Ende der Diskussionen. Nicol, L. (Hrsg.): Stuttgart 1998

<sup>3</sup> Maslo, I.: Mitsprache, Mitwirkung und Mitentscheidung als Indikatoren der Partizipation an Innovationsprozessen im Kontext der Bildungsreform. In: Innovationstransfer- und Forschungsinstitut für berufliche Aus- und Weiterbildung (Hrsg.): Lernen in Transformationsprozessen - Forschungsergebnisse und Erfahrungen aus der Republik Lettland. Broschüre Gestaltung regionaler Lernkulturen – Kompetenzentwicklung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 15 (2004), 13-24

Depending on nature, extension and complexity of project contents, experiences and results the different levels will be integrated in the process and in the dialogue. In this, teachers are at the same time learners.

The dialogue as principle and method in the learning partnership means, that transnational meetings are based on three pillars:

The first pillar is always a workshop on the topic "living, learning and working in a diverse society". In this workshop participants discuss examples as "Equality and Diversity Strategy at Dundee College", "The story way concept", „Workshop West“ or „Advance Women“.

Furthermore at this point the partners have the chance to get to know national and regional organizations that are dealing with diversity in their everyday business like "ONCE (national organizations of blind people in Santander)" or the „Dundee International Women`s center“.

Through these presentations, discussions and visits there are different perspectives and new experiences for the practical implementation of diversity in education processes gathered.

The second pillar of the work meetings is dominated by the internal dialogue of project partners regarding the fine-tuning of the learning partnership with the discussions about results and products of the partnership, the evaluation, the next tasks, the reporting and so on.

The third pillar of the work meetings is a cultural program with dialogues in the historical and political context of the region. Through these jointly free-time activities during the meetings the view on history, politics and daily life in the different countries is extended and new individual findings and understandings are gathered.

These three pillars of our transnational cooperation – workshops, joint project work and the cultural program in the different countries cannot be separated.

Due to the dialogue and the self-reflection in these interaction structures joint thinking processes are initiated. They lead to new knowledge und the development of competences among the involved persons during the project processing. Furthermore the dialogue oriented learning in the project not only promotes common knowledge, it initiates critical thinking<sup>4</sup>, because the project participants start to access and reflect the reliability and precision of statements and varieties of solutions according to their experiences.

Because the dialogue encourages the searching for mutually solution strategies as well as self-reflection and critical analysis it leads very quickly to an open learning and working atmosphere, that is characterized by acceptance and trust.

This principle and methodological approach offers a fundamental chance for learning in European projects in general and especially in this learning partnership. In this process all involved persons benefit. They learn from each other and together – a win-win situation is emerging. This is not every time and in the first line about specific competences, it is particularly about personal and social competences. There are new things encountered and horizons broadened – for the purpose of every single person and the organization.

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<sup>4</sup> Astleitner, H.: Kritisches Denken im Unterricht. Pädagogisches Handeln 4 (2000), 39-5

### 3 | Learning effects in the learning partnership

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In a two year long intense dialogue (bilateral meetings, multilateral meetings, e-mail exchange and a network-based learning and working platform,...) a sustainable individual and organizational development is gained on one hand. On the other hand a common base for further and future cooperation has been build.

Through the diverse activities in the learning partnership learning effects on two different levels were reached.

**First level is the individual level** which is characterized by the development of competences of all involved persons. This includes the directly involved transnational partners as well as the regional partners in the different countries. The development of competences is always the result of individual learning processes and of the dialogue with all direct and indirect involved persons.

The following original statement of Dr. Bernd F.<sup>5</sup> underlines this:

*„The Outcome of our meeting at DECROLY, SL, Santander, Spain, culminated for me in five points:*

- 1. There is an great interest but not enough knowledge and understanding in narrativation in educational institutes. Especially to cope with problems deriving from diversity approaches narrativation is an unusual but effective way.*
- 2. To have a bigger impact, an easier dissemination and a more "real picture" of the complexity of conditions to encourage diversity in educational practice the StoryWay-Concept, summaring Storytriggering (aiming clients, patients, students, staff, colleagues, to tell certain types of stories), Storylistening (gain the attention of clients through active listening and identify important information for your work with clients), Storytelling (make it easier for your clients to facilitate and processing the memories of important events, figures, data and facts using storytelling techniques) and Storychanging (Sustainable success can be achieved if the change of circumstances is completed by the change of behavior. Behavior can be changed by changing the stories clients used to tell about themselves.)*
- 3. Our spanish and scottisch colleagues have mostly the same problems with their pupils,so their concepts and good practice are useful for everyone.*
- 4. One difference in spain and scotland to germany is, that diversity ist not primarily a language problem. Because many (maybe most) immigrants are from latin america or, to speak about the scottish situation, from english speaking countries, there are no or low language barriers. Diversity may concentrate more of cultural and knowledge-aspects. In germany, language is the key factor of diversity especially with migrants.*
- 5. Diversity in disabilities or traditions can both achived in all countries by similar actions. One of this actions are the storyway-concept. Usually the hope was, that an logically correct, mathematic-wise language and conversation would be an kind of "lingua franca" but the*

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Bernd F. was learner in the project „Unity in Diversity“

*opposite happens. People need stories to express their identity, to change their (his)stories and last but not least, having fun, joy, delight and desire learning new ways of living and thinking.*

*Living, learning and working in a diverse society means to accept all the different stories people tell about themselves to express their identity and to retell the stories as stories of unification in difference, as stories of learning from each other”.*

**The second level is the organizational level**, which is characterized by the sensibilization of enterprises and education institutions for topics like diversity. The following aspects are central at this level:

- How can diversity in the pedagogical field be shaped?
- What are diversity competences? Diversity competences are not special competences for dealing with „other” people. They are a common social competence. People are not treated as a representative of a special group. They are recognized as individuals and taken serious.
- Educational institutions are not only a place of learning of learners, they are also a place of social contact and social interaction.
- Fight against right wing extremism – inclusion and exclusion – prayer rooms – patch work families – that are only a few key words that show the rapid social change of the last years, also education institutions need to contribute to solving these social problems
- Problems dealing with diversity are the different languages and cultures
- The role of the teachers in shaping diversity in the pedagogical field
- Development of learning situations for shaping diversity in the pedagogical field
- Teachers in education institutions are dealing with many different people. According to that the learning process is happening during their daily work life. Managing diversity is starting by looking at the internal processes and can make it easier by that.

At the transnational meetings national experiences and results to these aspects were presented and discussed. Through that new ideas emerged, that had a positive impact on the project work as well as on the work with the organizations and regional partners. The integration of partners from the practical field as learners encouraged a close to the field dialogue. At the same time these learners were multipliers for other education institutions.

In the dialogue in the learning partnership „Unity in Diversity” learning processes were initiated, in order to broaden horizons, encounter new things and shape diversity in the pedagogical field more concretely.

## 4 | Promotion of learning in European Projects

The following handout can help to detect the promotion of learning in the project „Unity in Diversity“. The criteria and indicators are a suggestion how to deal with the challenges for the project management, the project coordinator and project partners themselves.

Promotion of learning is defined as followed in the learning partnership:

“Promotion of learning is an immanent feature of the learning culture in the learning partnership. It characterizes a learning situation, that offers and supports the learning process”.

### Criteria and indicators for detecting of promotion of learning in European Projects

Criteria	Indicators	Extension				Summe
		1	2	3	4	
1. Motivation for the participation in the Learning Partnership “Unity in Diversity”	1.1 Project aim and contents are interesting for all partners					
	1.2 Project aim and contents require all partners to think and decide jointly					
	1.3 Project contents are processed as a project team					
2. Independent management of the project by the European project partners	2.1 Corresponding to the general targets, regional specifics can be considered					
	2.2 Project process can be organized itself					
	2.3 Project contents can be varied in the process					
3. Providing information for the project	3.1 The necessary information for processing of project contents is available (via Internet, intranets, ...)					
	3.2 The information must be processed by the project partners themselves					

	3.3 Project coordinator is available for answering questions and giving support					
4. Communication in the project	4.1 Project activities offer a continuous communication between project partners					
	4.2 Project activities require the communication to regional partners and organizations					
	4.3 Project activities promote social contact with other employees or within the project groups					
5. Acquisition of competences in the project	5.1 The experiences of the project partners can be introduced in the project					
	5.2 In the project competences for current didactic-methodical procedures are acquired or extended					
	5.3 In the project the social competences are extended					
6. Project aims and contents are complex	6.1 Project aims and contents require contextual thinking					
	6.2 Project aims and contents require complete activities (aim, action, result, correction...)					
	6.3 Project task enables to compare actual and desired status					



7. The project offers learning opportunities	7.1 project task requires finding solutions and solutions ways					
	7.2 In the project is time for searching information and exchange between the partners					
	7.3 In the realization of project task you encounter disturbances (disturbances are learning opportunities)					
<b>Result</b>						

The extension of indicators can be measured as followed:

1 not at all    2 a little bit    3 middle    4 strong

### **Evaluation of the promotion of learning in learning partnership**

A first assessment of promotion of learning can be realized through the following table:

points	84 until 80	79 until 67	66 until 50	49 until 34	less than 34
promotion of learning in Learning Partnership	very highly ex 95 %	highly ex 80%	medium ex 60%	low ex 40%	very low less than 40%

The promotion of learning in a learning partnership depends on more indicators, that are not pointed out here but have to be considered.

This covers among other things, e.g.:

- the necessary material infrastructure for learning and further learning in the learning partnership
- an open atmosphere in the learning partnership for innovations in the project