



## Project „Teaching Culture! - Teacher Training in Intercultural Awareness“

### WHAT?

*Previous European projects in the field of intercultural communication have either focussed on developing training courses for trainers of intercultural communication or on facilitating teaching materials in intercultural communication. We find, though, that intercultural awareness is a key skill that has to be integrated into any learning process rather than being taught separately. “Teaching Culture!” stresses the integrated concept of intercultural communication, raising the intercultural awareness of both teachers and learners.*

*“Teaching Culture!” aims at developing a training course for teachers which enables them to deal with intercultural issues appropriate to life in the growing European community. During their training course, teachers will themselves be part of an intercultural learning situation and thus bring their own experiences to the teaching modules they will develop and test with their adult learners.*

*“Teaching Culture!” will develop and apply innovative didactical and methodological approaches that take into consideration holistic concepts of teaching and learning, learner-centred social settings, autonomy-enhancing access to information, informal learning situations, and a multi-channel tackling of learning strategies that clearly involve intercultural awareness and competence to professionalize adult education in a multicultural Europe. In this context, Intercultural competence has to be seen as a life-long learning process, enabling residents of European countries and also the increasing numbers of migrant workers to live in and benefit from daily intercultural exchange.*

*“Teaching Culture!” focuses on teaching intercultural awareness while also looking at different cultures of teaching and learning. It should become a shared goal in European education that teaching is carried out by professionals who commit themselves to comparable standards, who have equal access to authentic resources, who work on the development of their own intercultural awareness and who share the responsibility of facilitating learning processes that enable adult learners to successfully take part in the intercultural dialogue.*

*The idea of the project is based on two assumptions: Firstly, intercultural contents have gained importance in international teaching over the last decades. Whereas formerly adult education was geared towards training content oriented skills, be they languages skills, computing skills or creative skills, nowadays teachers increasingly have to enable learners to work and live as well as learn in international contexts. Unfortunately, though, teachers and trainers are not prepared to integrate intercultural communication issues into their teaching. Even in foreign language teaching materials convey facts (and quite often stereotypes) about target cultures – be they national or business cultures – rather than facilitating intercultural competence.*

*On this blended learning course participants are trained to perceive cultural differences and act accordingly. The intercultural competence gained is both “culture-general” and “culture-specific”. As we know the Inter-Cultural Competence include:*

- *Knowledge (traditions and customs)*
- *Skills of interpreting and relating (eg documents and events)*
- *Skills of discovery and interaction*
- *Ability to evaluate differences*
- *Open attitude to understand and accept differences*

*Secondly, didactical and methodological professionalism has to be a benchmark of teaching, not only in primary and secondary education but also in continuing and adult education. Hardly any European*

*country has obligatory teacher training for university or adult education teachers. Consequently, the teachers' or instructors' qualifications vary widely. Some have academic degrees in education, other learnt methods 'on the job', some are just natural talents who have great success in getting their subject matters across to the students. Nevertheless, no common didactical and methodological standards are defined or mediated. "Teaching Culture!" therefore also wants to deal with the teaching culture of different European countries, working towards a common professional level of Adult Education, especially in the field of intercultural communication.*

## **WHY?**

IT literacy is accepted as an essential life skill but in the future inter-cultural literacy will be just as important. The ability to communicate and operate effectively with people from another culture is based on an understanding of how they see the world. So, we must get basic information about both "culture-general" and "culture-specific".

Greater international mobility means more meeting of cultures and the expansion of the EU means more movement of people can be expected.

While new member states are about to be integrated into the European Union, it is far from clear whether in future the EU will only be an economic/monetary union or whether it will also have a strong political and cultural unity which will enable European citizens to have their say in global issues.

Currently, European citizens are facing major changes in their own (more and more multicultural) societies as well as in a growing European community. A major task of European Adult Education will be to support this process and enable adults, residents as well as migrants, to take advantage of the changes in society. Due to the change in working-life settings, the strong influence of the new media, and the possibilities of computer-mediated communication, the role of adult education teachers will have to change, too. Not only will they have to be trained to enable adult learners to take part in the European intercultural dialogue, they will also have to learn how to work in intercultural surroundings themselves, as their groups of learners become increasingly multicultural.

All those basic knowledge young people can get at school, at University, especially at foreign languages classes. School curricula now must include Inter – Cultural competence but adults are not catered for; they are the 'lost generation'.

This is a point why project "Teaching –Culture!" trains teachers how to teach adults. The main questions:

1. Are adult learners different?  
Teaching and learning
2. Do you hear what I hear?  
Communication and mutual counselling
3. You're not on your own!  
Learning in an with groups
4. Show and tell –  
Presentation and moderation techniques
5. Did you like it?  
Quality management and evaluation

Adult teachers will get teaching and learning „Survival Kit“:

- ▶ Adult learning psychology
- ▶ Planning teaching units
- ▶ Motivating adults
- ▶ Teaching adults how to learn
- ▶ Integrating interactive, learner-centred methods



Though intercultural awareness is a key issue in most curricula (and certainly in the demands of the global labour market) it mainly focuses on knowledge about the target language/culture. Apart from the question of content, there are no guidelines concerning teaching methods or assessment standards in the field of intercultural issues. The project will develop teaching modules that focus on raising intercultural awareness rather than conveying bits of information. It will also develop and provide suitable teaching methods and a guideline to assess attainment in the field of intercultural learning.

Since quality management has become widely accepted, it should become a shared goal in European education that teaching is carried out by professionals who commit themselves to comparable standards, who have equal access to authentic sources and resources, who work on the development of their own intercultural awareness and who share the responsibility of facilitating learning processes that enable adult learners to successfully take part in the intercultural dialogue. These ideas can be implemented only by new educational concepts of training the teachers, increasing their professional self esteem, and by designing intercultural concepts in a multicultural European context.

## HOW ?

Theoretical insights into different working styles, perceptions of time, religions and education styles are applied in exercises during the residential course and in concrete international Internet simulations between the participants of the Teaching-Culture Project.

This involves online and face-to-face interaction with participants from several other cultures. Students acquire the ability to master and reflect upon challenges in intercultural communication.

As the subject is about communication, the seminar relies on active participation of the students on the e-learning platform as well as in the residential week. Identifiable oral participation (e.g. presentations) and written contributions (e.g. cultural diaries, active involvement in email exchange with the learner partners, essays, etc.) build the basis for assessment.

In order to achieve all “Teaching – Culture!” aims,

- a teacher training course has to be developed which enhances adult education teachers’ methodological and didactical competence and their intercultural awareness as well as their competence in using the new media in a creative and effective way. In developing and conducting the teacher training in cross-European teams, “Teaching Culture!” will contribute to the culture-general applicability and international comparability of teacher training in the field of intercultural communication.
- teachers have to be enabled to create their own culture-general teaching materials in a meaningful way regarding both content and methodology. Shared experiences and exchange at a European level will be crucial in this process of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.
- teachers and learners need a cross-European scale of assessing intercultural competence. Just as the Common European Framework of Reference provides an ideal scale for self assessment of lingual skills, a ‘hands-on’ scale for intercultural competencies is needed.

Teacher Training Course in Intercultural Awareness: An international teacher training course for adult education teachers will be developed which specifically focuses on the intercultural dialogue. The training course will include units on learner orientation, learner autonomy and communicative approaches in teaching etc. as well as units on distance learning, media awareness, the development of teaching material and the issue of raising intercultural awareness. It will be modular, including both self-study, online learning and group teaching phases. The training course will include cooperative work using an Internet based learning and communication platform, self-study with CD-ROM based material, and a written documentation for a one week, modular face-to-face teaching course.

The teacher training is structured in three parts:

- A virtual learning phase
- a face-to-face one week training with the whole international team in Vilnius (2005)
- the development and testing of teaching modules by small international teams

Making the teachers experience a new culture themselves is an integral part of the concept. Therefore, the contact situation during the one-week face-to-face training will take place in a cultural context new to the participants and will, apart from theoretical, methodological and didactical parts, also include simulations in an intercultural setting, e.g. first lessons in the country's language and, tasks to be fulfilled (asking for directions, collecting information, going shopping etc.).

Teaching Modules on Intercultural Awareness in Adult Education: The teaching modules developed by the participants of the teacher training will focus on genuine intercultural competence instead of fragmentary knowledge about the target culture. They will be developed by the participants in international teams as integral part of the teacher training and will be tried out by each teacher in their own courses. Consequently, the modules will be internationally applicable, irrespective of the target language. They will be documented both in the respective classroom language and in English as common language for the intercultural teams (DA, DE, EN, ES, SE, LT, RO).

The exemplary topic of the modules will be 'everyday culture', specifically 'food and drink', as this topic is relevant to learners irrespective of age, gender, education etc. Furthermore, the topic of food and drink touches on all sections of life, from spoon-feeding to business lunches, and therefore can be used to convey all aspects of intercultural awareness. These modules will be digitalized to make them available to other adult education teachers.

Website: A Project website has already been installed to document the project process and activities during the process ([www.teaching-culture.de](http://www.teaching-culture.de)). Apart from functioning as a "digital diary" of the project, documenting activities, progress and results of the teacher training courses etc, the website will include a selection of links to relevant other websites on the topic of intercultural communication etc. It will also include a collection of all teaching modules developed by the participants.

Project documentation (papers, book and/or CD-ROM): Apart from constant publication via articles and conferences, the results of the project will be documented in form of a publication. All project partners will contribute articles to document the stages of the project. This publication will mainly focus on the proceedings of the project and reflect practical experiences, successes as well as problems we might have faced during the project.

All groups involved in life-long learning will benefit from the outcomes: Teaching institutions such as adult education centres and universities as well as teachers and learners will profit both from common professional standards of adult education teaching and from topical modules and methodology facilitating the intercultural dialogue.

Organisations, partners as well as other organisations, will be able to apply the teacher training course to train teachers of all subjects. Teachers and trainers will benefit from a training course that enhances their professional competencies and teachers as well as learners of all subjects will benefit from a raised intercultural awareness which enables them to live and work in multicultural surroundings. A collection of all teaching modules developed by the participants of the teacher training will be accessible to all adult educator via the project website.

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