



## The Ideology of MORE THAN WORDS

Let's begin with the most important section of our application form, because it states very clearly what the MORE THAN WORDS project is all about, and what it wants to achieve. To ensure the successful delivery of the project, we have to keep these governing principles in mind at all times.

“MORE THAN WORDS is aiming at improving intercultural communication and training skills of educators, social workers, and all people being engaged as professionals or activists in supporting migrants and other minorities tackling problems of integration and communication.

We will develop a pan European curriculum for non-verbal intercultural trainings, synthesizing the experiences of our partners in different areas of training and creativity, such as theatre, dance, humour therapy and storytelling.

Our project clearly fits to the self-identification of the Erasmus+ programme as ‘an instrument promoting the inclusion of people with disadvantaged backgrounds, including newly arrived migrants’ (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, p.9.)

This project is crucial in terms of Europe's relationship to migrant communities and other minorities, especially under the current political and social tensions all over in the Continent. There is an urgent need to develop strategies allowing migrants and other minorities to integrate into European societies, while at the same time retaining a sense of their own identity, and a pride in their cultural roots.”

It is worth underlining the ethical and political dimension in what we said we wanted to do. The word “political” is actually present in our statement of intent: we said that the project was a response to political tensions, and that we intended to develop approaches which would enable minorities (particularly those who have limited or no knowledge of the local language) “to integrate into European societies, **while at the same time retaining a sense of their own identity**, and a pride in their cultural roots.”

In other words, this is very much a project about enabling people (rather than instructing them), and about celebrating the aspects of their culture that make them distinct from that of the majority. In Section C of the application, we say that we aim to “establish good practices to embrace and celebrate diversity.” So the project is emphatically NOT about assimilation. It is not about teaching people from diverse communities the “right” way to do something, making them “like us”, retaining an impregnable stasis in our own “successful” position. It IS about integration, in the sense that the term is used by the EU: finding educational, cultural and artistic approaches which allow the expression of diverse voices in public space, so as to facilitate

greater mutual understanding and a dynamic, dialogic interchange and development in democratic space. We discussed the best terminology around this in Lublin, where ideas of integration and co-existence, conviviality and <<Leben in vielfalt>> were offered as models. Let's now add the French concept of <<cosmopolitanisme>> - the idea of a community in which individuals from varying locations (physical, economic, etc.) enter relationships of mutual respect despite their differing beliefs (religious, political, etc.).

It was because of this emphasis on equality, integration and dialogue that the application emphasised a horizontal approach to teaching and learning, citing Kolb's experiential learning theory. A project that aims to embrace people who have little shared knowledge and culture can only be rooted in experience, in learning through doing. In order to draw out the creativity of culturally diverse people with limited or no knowledge of the local language, educators and creative practitioners need to develop a pedagogy that recognises and embraces subjectivity and viewpoint as necessary and productive attributes of cultural difference; and so celebrates learning as a creative process, which unlocks and reveals new ideas beyond the existing knowledge of either the learner or the facilitator. This approach, theorised by educationalists like Dorothy Heathcote or Paolo Freire, is ideal as a means to empower and validate learners who may feel excluded or inadequate in the daily life of a society that is new and alien to them, as well as facilitating, indeed requiring, a process of exchange with the host population.

What emphatically does not work in a process of this kind is a vertical, or "top down" pedagogy, in which knowledge is regarded as the property of the teacher or trainer, and is imparted to the learners with minimal interaction and without the generation of new knowledge: what Freire called the "banking model". Traditional teaching practice is based on a hierarchy of knowledge, and so of power, and this can make it very challenging to give up. However, if MORE THAN WORDS is serious about generating real creative engagement with and by minority groups and people who do not speak our language(s), then there is a clear need to adopt a horizontal, two-way learning approach.

The project model that has now been agreed in Lublin meets these identified needs well. Each of the partners offering training (Border Crossings, CRN, EuroNet, IKTE) will be mindful of the needs of the target groups, and these needs will constantly be fed back and further explored by the community partners (AEL, NARUD, Dla Ziemi). There will be an ongoing dialogue between the different methodologies for engagement and the groups we aim to engage. This will lead to the Synthesis Workshop in Luxembourg, where the partners will work collaboratively and experimentally to identify the most effective approaches to creative, cultural work which enables the integration (through self-expression) of new citizens in European communities.

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