



Intellectual Output 4 - Pilot Reports

MAKING DIVERSITY AWARENESS AN INTEGRAL PART OF ALL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES | CYCLISIS

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project “Diversity Capacities - Improving the Capacities of Adult Education Institutions to Successful Dealing with Diversity”

Grant Agreement Number 2018-1-AT01-KA204-039271



The publication was developed under the framework of the Erasmus+ Project “Diversity Capacities - Improving the Capacities of Adult Education Institutions to Successful Dealing with Diversity (DivCap)” (2018 - 2021)

The programme is a partnership of the following organisations:

FH JOANNEUM - Institute of Social Work, Graz, Austria

Cramars società cooperativa sociale, Tolmezzo, Italy

DAFNI KEK, Patras, Greece

Fundación Docete Omnes, Granada, Spain

Obrtničko učilište, Zagreb, Croatia

Participatie in Diversiteit, Enschede, Netherlands

Volkshochschule Hannover, Germany

Author

Tsekoura, Vassiliki

Giannakopoulou, Anastasia

Patras, 2021

Graphic Design and Layout

Giannakopoulou, Angeliki

Jaklić, Valentina

Photographs

Photo by Scott Webb on Unsplash

Project Information

Information on the project is available at the project website:

<https://www.diversitycapacities.eu//>



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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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The “Diversity Capacities- Improving the Capacities of Adult Education Institutions to Successful Dealing with Diversity - DivCap” project, Grant Agreement Number 2018-1-AT01-KA204-039271 has been funded through the European Commission/Programme Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education with the support of the Austrian national Agency. This publication reflects the views only of the authors and the numerous participants who engaged with the Project. As such the commission cannot be held responsible for the contents of this publication or indeed the use of the information it contains therein.

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Bringing people and institutions from both culture and education sector in communication, together with business sector and local communities' representatives.

Illustration 1: The suitcase theater performance of the Together Within Project © Cyclisis

The Organisation

CYCLISIS is a small organisation but very active in the field of social exclusion. Its activities embrace all citizens in question of opportunities for getting involved in non-formal education.



Illustration 2: Pictures from the “Together Within” Cinema workshop where refugees, NEETS, management staff, Volunteers and long term unemployed people of the community got together © Cyclisis

1. Presence in the Community - Diversity oriented

CYCLISIS is a small organisation but very active in the field of social exclusion. Its activities embrace all citizens in question of opportunities for getting involved in non-formal education a message that can be easily clarified by navigating the organisation's website: cyclisis.gr . The interesting issue was that CYCLISIS managed to bring together people from different social strands, natives and refugees in common activities. Due to its small size as organisation, the activities can be organised in cooperation with various peer institutions and settings, in order to allow visibility and the necessary convenience.

CYCLISIS is an independent non-profit institution active in the field of education, culture and environment, located in the suburbs of Patras. They are active on the European and Greek national level, focusing on the promotion of intercultural awareness through research and practice.

Their mission is to bring people and institutions from both culture and education sector in communication, together with business sector and local communities' representatives. CYCLISIS aims, according to its statute, to contribute, through lifelong learning, to the development of the community as an advanced knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, and greater social cohesion, whilst ensuring adequate environmental protection for future generations.

CYCLISIS aims in particular at enhancing exchanges, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems in the community as a point of quality. Furthermore, the organisation wishes to contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue and awareness-raising activities of the local community on racism and xenophobia, to promote equality of opportunity and to combat discrimination of all kinds.

It is also upon the organisation to train current and / or appointed teachers in the context of lifelong adult education in culture with a view to dealing with routine or burn out situations.

Along with the above CYCLISIS, works for the creation of integration opportunities for people with special abilities, mental and physical disabilities in actions of culture and education. Networking with local, national and further stakeholders in order to promote intercultural dialogue for a society of equal opportunities, is also stated on the website and various promotional leaflets etc.

Together with their work partners, they conceive, organize and coordinate projects in the following fields: non-formal adult education and training, educational policy, intercultural dialogue, sustainability and innovation.

2. A Journey towards establishing Diversity

Based on the case study carried out through the DivCap project, the status of Cyclisis in terms of diversity is on the level of intercultural diversity management, based on whom they address their services as well as the openness to include and employ people from intercultural backgrounds in the near future. The people involved showed a strong understanding of diversity and interculturality. But nevertheless a lot of steps are still needed to be taken to make sure that this is a continuous and progressive reality.

Diversity aspects can be found in the following domains examined in the case study:

- migrants/refugees
- Roma community
- neurodiverse individuals
- unemployed people, especially young adults



As it was concluded from Cyclisis' staff answer, as well as a research on their activities and statements, it is shown that the organisation addresses mainly people from marginalised/underrepresented groups such as migrants, refugees, Roma communities, systemically excluded individuals and especially women, unemployed youth, long term unemployed persons and neurodiverse individuals.

2.1 The institution in the migrant society

Migrants are regularly addressed through the activities of Cyclisis, but generally all activities can be attended by all interested, which is also an element of Cyclisis' approach in making mixed groups of learners whenever that's possible.

Cyclisis also regularly communicates with relevant organisations such as migrant communities/associations, municipalities / local authorities and housing / accommodation agencies / services / NGOs.

In the last years, Patras (the city where Cyclisis is active at) has been at the center of the migration route due to its connection with Italy. Nowadays Patras receives much less migrants and almost no refugees. Still nearby cities receive them, although since mid-2019 cooperation of migration authorities with small-scale educational centers and non-profit organisations that work for migrants' and refugees' inclusion, have been heavily persecuted by the government thus making the implementation of inclusion activities for newcomers really difficult to achieve.

2.2 Inclusion of cultural/ethnic minorities

Cyclisis has strong and longterm standing cooperation with some small local Roma communities. Many of their activities and approaches are addressed also to the Roma communities, although outreach is still relatively challenging. Rural Roma communities comprise of people that are really interested in learning opportunities, especially in terms of language and writing as well as being part of collective discussions. So far Cyclisis has had few opportunities to systemically contribute to the expressed needs of the community, due to issues with transportation and available infrastructure due to need for face-to-face activities. Nevertheless, it is a goal that they believe they will be able to achieve sometime in the near future and after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.3 Neurodiverse individuals

In 2017, the staff of Cyclisis took part in a series of trainings concerning neurodiversity in education and society, which lead to a cooperation with some experts on the field of autism. Through this opportunity, the staff of Cyclisis had the chance to research and learn on the needs of neurodiverse individuals, especially autistic persons, which made very evident the need for adapted learning opportunities to also appeal to the needs of neurodiverse people. Neurodiverse people are often excluded from learning opportunities, especially those that require regular support from a carer. For this reason, Cyclisis is offering person-centered planning counselling tools and is also considering at this stage at adapting some of its material to simple language and format for better accessibility.

2.4 Skills development and training for unemployed youth

Cyclisis has had the chance to work on many projects that helped develop a series of tools, strategies and methodologies for providing young adults with information, skills and resources which could help support their integration to the labour market mainly as members of social enterprises. **Young adults (without of course excluding all other ages) are being provided with mobility opportunities, exchanges and support for establishing their own collective initiatives with regards to EU and other grants available.** This category is a more general category, meaning that addresses individuals from all of the previously mentioned categories and they also offer the most inclusive opportunities for mixed learner groups.

3. Making Interculturality a standard Practice

Alongside the Cyclisis team we had to identify thought processes that would better facilitate the needed actions to be taken in order for the organization to stand in its diversity grounds. The Two following thought processes arised:

Blue-print thinking	rationality, not power matters most (rational approach)	The assumption is that change happens only when you analyse first what problem is, suggest the best possible solution, and implement it according to plan. Change is thus deemed a linear endeavour: you think first before you act. The process is expert driven: the activities are executed by those who have the necessary know-how and experience.
Green print thinking	emphasis in on learning (learning approach)	Changing and learning are deemed inextricably linked: they are thought to mean almost the same. The only way forward from a green point of view is to dig deeper: to discover one’s limits and expand and deepen the way we see and act in the world.

Given the above suggestion, the team of Cyclisis worked on finding those practices that would serve these approaches. Based on their feedback, this process gave space for many fruitful discussions and potential plans as well as it also lead the people involved to research and study more on the subject and try to detect practices that would be relevant to their way of operation.

Resources

Vermaak, H.; Caluwé, L. de (2018): The colors of change - revisited. Situating and describing the theory and its practical applications. Draft Manuscript. In: Shani, R.; Noumair, D. (Eds) (2018): Research in Organizational Change and Development (vol. 26), Bingley (UK): Emerald Insight, <https://hansvermaak.com/wp-content/uploads/Vermaak-Caluwe-SHARE-VERSION-Colors-Revisited-ROCD-2018-FINAL-DRAFT.pdf> [last access 2020-02-24]



“It was a really nice experience, to research and see different methods that are available to make use of and in a manner that wasn’t strictly defined by a deadline. Yes, the results have to be communicate, but nevertheless this process is a continuous one without a visible end since things always change. We came across many interesting methodologies and we brainstormed a lot. We did get a bit overwhelmed throughout the process because there were so many possibilities and we didn’t know what to prioritise. This is where the blue-print approach reminded to us that we need a rational approach that takes into consideration the things that we have worked on and the experience we carry. New knowledge and new methodologies will be used and integrated on an already specified model. And for this reason, we decided to make intercultural competences an integral part of all our educational activities, not only when and if it is required.”

(P.T. - Board and staff member of Cyclisis)



Eventually, the team, after many weeks of research and brainstorming, they decided to start be following a rational approach. This clarified the need to resurface and integrate prior developed and acquired knowledge and resources to be included in all of the educational activities of the organisation.

The process followed was the following:

1. The team was offered the assessment of their case study
2. The team read the case study findings and assessment and discussed upon them
3. They decided to do some more research, based on the guidelines provided by the DivCap partnership
4. They consulted with the Dafni Kek team for potential concrete actions to be taken
5. After a span of 8 weeks including brief consultations, further research and detection of relevant models, the team decided to review the recommendations in order to reflect on the best approach
6. The team decided on its plan which is currently under way

The decided plan of action focuses on increasing opportunities for intercultural training throughout the organisation’s activities. This applies to two categories:

1. staff of the organisation as well as future external trainers and educators based on current resources and
2. integrating diversity assessment and intercultural competence building in all - when possible - current and existing educational material.

The organisation believes that this way, and with each opportunity provided, diversity awareness becomes more accessible to the learners and it also provides the opportunity to having a constant mentality reminder for future activities.

Cyclisis is currently developing two training programmes where diversity assessment for educational organisations has been integrated in the learning material as training session.

3.1 Aims and approaches

The decided plan of action reflects the current state of the organisation.

As Cyclisis staff mentioned in the bilateral communications with the DivCap facilitator who supported them in the process, the DivCaP diversity assessment process provided them with great insight over the diversity-conscious mentality development. The DivCap assessment process extends the diversity questionnaire and case study recommendations in order to facilitate apt changes in adult education institutions.

Because of that, the team considered it a great asset for some of their current projects where they also had the liberty to include some of the lessons learnt.

At this moment the general approach could be summarised as follows:

- integrate diversity assessment as a regular educational practice
- use reflection and feedback to determine emerging needs and decide changes and updates
- take small and rational steps, assessing the current possibilities
- share good practices with learners



Through this approach, Cyclisis aims to follow a relatively “extroverted” approach. As mentioned above, the current plan is to integrate/adapt parts of the DivCap methodology in their educational activities. This way, and through the free trainings they will be offering in the summer of 2021, the team of Cyclisis aims at “communicating” the diversity assessment and competence development among trainers, professionals and learners.

Through that they aspire to become more understanding of the different worldviews, needs, motivations, fears and challenges that trainers and learners alike find in diversity. This “reporting” will allow for a better planning of measures to be taken to serve diversity in a manner that allows for the co-existence and the co-participation of people from different backgrounds.

Additionally, it would be a great opportunity for the team to find people (while also training them) who could also be future colleagues, based on their approach towards the issue of diversity. Due to the nature of the trainings and the organisation, the people addressed to participate are also people from diverse backgrounds, references and life experiences.

3.2 Activities

Currently Cyclisis is developing two educational programmes where the DivCap methodology is being included, after being adapted to fit their need.

3.2.1. Masterclass for facilitators in Person-centered planning for Autism

The masterclass for facilitators, is a 5 module course addressed to facilitators of autistic individuals. It is based on the person-centered planning approach and along with the PCP System publication and the Guidelines for facilitators, they make up a comprehensive system to support the social inclusion of autistic individuals that require relative to substantial everyday support. The facilitators are defined as any person that is responsible for the support of an autistic individual, regardless of their academic level or cultural, financial, etc. background.

In the framework of this course, Cyclisis developed, among others, two chapters that drew inspiration from the DivCap methodology. These chapters are:

- Organisational change to support social inclusion - Inspired by the ADA Workshops held and documented by the DivCap Project
- Going forward - Assessment and Review - Inspired by the Diversity Questionnaire created by the DivCap project

In the first chapter, the material addresses the mentality of the facilitators either within an organisation or as advocates in the different structures they are part of. The examples provided refer to the case of educational institutions but the material has been adapted to be transferrable to other settings as well.

In the second chapter, the DivCap methodological processes and guidance, as extracted through the piloting process and in relation to the needs of Cyclisis, will be briefly and experientially mentioned while the tools created throughout the implementation period of the DivCap project will be presented as a comprehensive framework for assessing and reflecting on an action, in order to take steps forward for the future.

The content is still in developmental phase and it will be piloted in the period July-August 2021. After the piloting, the results will be available through Cyclisis' website.



Illustration 3: Official Poster of the AUTISM_PCP Project MasterClass © Cyclisis

3.2.2 LIREA project and Diversity Capacities

LIREA - Training for professionals

The LIREA training for professionals is a 7 module course, addressed to professionals involved in the empowerment and social inclusion of migrant victims of trafficking. The course tackles a series of issues related to the phenomenon of trafficking, support for victims, (re)integration approaches and community activities for social inclusion. For the development of the course and its content, approaches from the DivCap project were included in one tailored modules.

Module “Adult Education and Diversity Awareness”

Under the module “Adult Education and Diversity Awareness”, the DivCap project was the basis for the community activities for social inclusion.

In this module of the LIREA training, professionals are made familiar with the DivCap methodology and approach, always taking into consideration the peculiarities of the trafficking experiences and the need for increased emotional support and empowerment.

The Diversity Capacities of the organisations, the ability to check our privileges and the context upon which access is fostering where key elements of the module.

This course’s approach aims to also act as a reflective and self-assessment basis also for the professionals, based on the knowledge acquired, their experiences and the desired outcome which is the empowerment and personal independence and sense of freedom among victims of trafficking.

The professionals involved were from different backgrounds, including also individuals with migration background and intercultural references.

The content is in developmental/reassessment phase and will be publicly available with open access after the end of the LIREA project through Cyclisis’ website.



LIREA
life is reborn from the ash

LIREA - Psycho-socio empowerment and labour market insertion laboratories

Cyclisis, through the LIREA project, is implementing educational laboratories that are aimed at helping support migrants that have been victims of trafficking, into the labour market thus achieving social and financial independence. These laboratories are further supported by psychologists and cultural mediators, who in their turn assess and further support the learners in completing their participation and better achieving independence and freedom by addressing also their feelings to a trusted professional.

For these laboratories, Cyclisis came in contact, and consequently collaborating, with a migrant women associations network (Melissa Network: <https://melissanetwork.org/>) that comprises of migrant-women led associations and individuals. For the implementation of the workshops, the beneficiaries were reached through the Melissa Network, respecting all their personal data and experiences. Additionally, in order to better tend to the cultural needs, as well as have better impact of the activities, Cyclisis hired two migrant women, a psychologist and a cultural mediator, former trusted beneficiaries of Melissa, who are working on an everyday basis for the implementation of the psychological support and cultural mediation in laboratories as well as labour market insertion.

This direct involvement of people with characteristics of the target group, in equal terms to the “local” professionals, has been a really positive development which not only helps to the quality financial independence of migrants, but also allows for more collaboration and cooperation between migrant populations and local professionals, thus helping integration and diversity among further education institutions. Thanks to the insight provided through the ADA Workshops, Cyclisis felt more confident in involving directly and in equal terms people from its relevant target groups into its activities something that according to the staff and management

“has been proved a really influential practice which has also contributed to us establishing a new network of partners, giving space to hopefully more impactful and worthwhile learning and collaboration experiences in the future”.

<https://www.lireaproject.eu>

4. A motivational process

During the process of increasing the diversity capacities of the organisation, the staff came across many different options that were available to them and learnt a lot of things that made them motivated for the next steps.

As mentioned above, at the beginning there was a feeling of overwhelm, because this occasion brought to the surface many different needs that needed to be addressed.

The staff started with the learning process, taking into consideration the recommendations of the case study and drawing inspiration from the bibliography used in the DivCap project. They came across all the options, approaches and tools, policy establishment, communication strategies and many other aspects that were both really interesting as well as intimidating at the moment.

The final choice, integrating diversity capacities development in their courses seemed like a good idea since it offered a good chance at constantly reworking and reflecting on current practices, while also promoting the diversity mentality.

At this point the team believes that they have learnt many things which can help them built on more effectively in the coming months, making plans along with their local partners (incl. Dafni Kek) on launching some services addressed to people with fewer opportunities. These services will consist of face to face trainings and sessions (given the needs that arose during the Covid-19 pandemic and the extreme impact it had on people with fewer means) as well as using the knowledge both from past experience as well as the DivCap project to train other institutions and workplaces in being more welcoming.

The process left the team with motivation for the next steps since so far the approach has started gaining some popularity and facilitates the connection with other trainers and activities which will involve their target group.

4.1 Next Steps

For Cyclis the next steps upon realizing a truly diverse environment, based on the concrete experiences of the staff and management are going to follow the three following pillars of actions:

Enforce local cooperation with active involvement on all levels (assistance-> employment-> management) of the target groups if the organization namely, refugees, Roma people, NEETS and long-term unemployed.

Cultivate systemic outreach approaches in the organization to invite and involve underrepresented majorities and minorities

Enhance monthly discussions of the staff on matters of representation, diversity, safe spaces for work and others.

4.2 Recommendations for Educational Staff

Through the training process, it became evident that the team of Cyclisis became really motivated by the proposed approach.

In the discussions following the piloting the Educational Staff of Cyclisis along with DAFNI KEK realised formulated the following recommendations on what should be included in the strategy of the institutions:

1. The educational staff has to keep the “pursuit” of knowledge running.
2. New approaches are constantly being developed and are useful for the educator as well as for the learner.
3. Feeling overwhelmed is reasonable, and for this reason the educators should be constantly in touch and communicating with each other.
4. It is also recommended that the educators take the learning approach a little more rationally, studying few resources at a time, brainstorm with the other member and find realistic solutions that enforce problem-solving mentalities.

4.3 Recommendations for non-Educational Staff and Managers

Similarly, to the non-educational staff and Management, this occasion was a nice opportunity for some of them to also dwell on more intellectual work.

The main recommendations that the non-educational and administrative staff came towards throughout the piloting:

1. Non-educational staff play a role in diversity management, and as such training and diversity discussions have to be held concerning them as well.
2. Sometime overachieving may have the opposite results than the ones desired, meaning that engagement with diversity policies and approaches is not a process that can be rushed.
3. Rationalising and building ideologies concerning challenges and states while enforcing diverse voices is crucial.
4. It is also recommended that they support and facilitate the inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds within the organisation.

5. ANNEX - Good Practice Examples

5.1 The Lirea - “Adult Education and Diversity Awareness” Training Module Outline

Module Title: Adult Education and Diversity Awareness

Brief Description:

This course aims to extend the notions of the participants from a national-based social inclusion process (top-down approach) to a wider one (bottom-up approach), composed by both social and economic full integration, carried out by Member States and by European Union as a whole, while socio-economic diversity is a key concept for enhancing the importance of double level of project intervention, on people and on systems.

Units of interest:

1. Raising awareness of diversity within educational context

How can we get in touch with how truly we tackle our capacities as counsellors, educators, organisations or learners in terms of diversity, bias, privilege and others. In this unit we discuss on key themes inspired by the DivCap Project ADA workshops.

1. Assessing diversity capacities

Being aware of the diverse inclinations inside a group of people with similar experiences and journeys is key. The educational context had to constantly be aware of the safety and comfortability status of the participants, as well as enforcing multiple representations.

1. Making a plan to increase diversity

Concrete planning can get us ahead of the challenges that come with fruitful heterogeneities. Organisations, professionals and educators are called in this unit to reflect on their policies and create systemic approaches towards increasing diversity spirits.

1. Updating the organisations diversity policies

In this unit we practically strive for change in the policies and mission statements of our organisations.

1. Trainings on diversity

Diversity management and awareness is an ever expanding process that can only foster in environments of tactical and systemic training. In this unit we aim to create feasible plans for continuing trainings on matters of diversity awareness in institutions working with victims of trafficking.



www.diversitycapacities.eu

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This document reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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