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Needs analysis

Project:

Talking about taboos: Website to help adult trainers address racism, xenophobia and other prejudices in their classrooms

GRUNDTVIG Learning Partnerships. LLP 2007-2013 - N. 2013-1-FR1-GRU06-49587

THE RAINBOW INSTALATION AND EVERYDAY MANIFESTATIONS OF RACIAL PREJUDICE IN POLAND

Partner organization
FUNDACJA CITIZEN PROJECT
1. What is the concrete problem addressed
In 2013, during the Independence March, its nationalist participants destroyed a work of art – the installation of a „rainbow”. It was fifth time since 2012 that this „rainbow” was destroyed. The destruction of this piece has become a symbol of the will of individuals and groups within Polish society to exclude while its restoration time and again by the local Warsaw authorities can be interpreted both as a fight for tolerance and as a provocation.
2. How is this problem connected to the themes of the project (stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination)?
The Rainbow installation has many layers of significance. It is an art piece. And as such it is interpreted in various ways: as a symbol of tolerance, especially of the LGBT community, and as a symbol of top-down arrogance to force values upon society. The various interpretations of the same object promise to provide an interesting insight in the way individuals and groups of individuals phrase their opinions on the theme of social exclusion. It seems a relevant point of reference in a wider discussion on minorities in Poland. The fact that the issue involves a symbol is significant, because political and social discourses in Poland are focusing especially on symbols. This is caused by Poland’s turbulent history that has not yet provided enough breathing space to establish clear discourses on identity related themes – and hence it focuses on the level of symbols to try and establish collective meanings. In this sense, there’s no social dialogue, there’s only an ideological dialogue, in which stereotypes, prejudices and symbols of

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discrimination are shown as ideological symbols – and are used to polarize.

3. What target groups linked to adult education are directly touched by the needs assessment?

- **Adult trainers/ therapists;**
- **Local government organizations/ NGOs providing adult education**
- **Teachers dealing with parents, directors, local governments;**
- **Local government officials dealing with adult teachers;**
- **Journalists dealing with the general audience**
- **General audience**

4. What methods were used in the needs assessment

- **LITERATURE STUDY:** Research on general frames available in scientific literature and research on specific frames appearing on the rainbow installation in the Polish national and local online and offline media.
- **FOCUS GROUPS:** Representatives from the target groups met offline and were requested to provide feedback on (1) news articles; (2) questionnaire results – see below; (3) framing options for the discussion; (4) good practices.
- **QUESTIONNAIRE:** Representatives from the direct target groups (adult trainers, local government organizations and teachers dealing with parents) were targeted to present their framing of the discussion and of the advocates of the anti- and pro- rainbow stances while being asked to disclose their own stance.

5. Main conclusions of the needs assessment

The main results from the Needs Analysis are:

- **For many the topic is a taboo topic; people do not like to provide their opinion because they do not want to polarize and are afraid of the reaction of the person they are talking to.**
- **Many have an (outspoken) opinion on the topic that they rather only discuss among likeminded. In public or online they are reluctant to speak their mind. Only those with an identified strong opinion voice it also publicly. Hence the media debate is dominated by those with an extreme opinion – which leads others to rather stay even more quiet but hoping that the discussion will stop soon.**
- **Although the most visible opinions on the “rainbow” in the media are negative, the respondents in the questionnaire were rather more pro and said they understood those pro better.**
- **A small minority condemns advocates of a different opinion as their own in exclusive terms such as “excluded” or “(non-)patriots” – read (non-)ultra-nationalists.**
- **A big majority frames the advocates of a different opinion as their own in inclusive terms: “normal people”.**
- **The second most inclusive framing of people with a different opinion is “weak people” (for pro- advocates by anti- advocates) and**

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“extermists” and “backward” people (for anti- advocates).

- **This means a public dialogue is a hard aim to strive for but in smaller, more trusted surroundings a dialogue on the topic seems possible, although not simple.**

6. What kind of local action could address the identified problem? What kind of alternative frames could be used? What good practices you envisage to adapt and test?

Local actions that could address the problem identified are:

- **Promoting offline dialogues in smaller, more trusted surroundings.**
- **Promoting instruments that create a more trusted setting to conduct a dialogue**

The alternative framing of the subject concerns the insight that a moderate frame is dominant among the population but not in the media discourse. The moderate frame does not rest on mutual exclusion like the media discourse but rests on inclusion within which there is a mere difference of opinion.

The good practices that are envisaged to adapt and test are instruments that:

- **Facilitate a trust setting;**
- **Facilitate civil courage;**
- **Facilitate beginning an open conversation on difficult subjects;**
- **Facilitate intense listening;**
- **Facilitate voicing one’s stance inclusively;**
- **Facilitate countering exclusive framing.**

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