

LET'S MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE



WORKING WITH VULNERABLE GROUPS IN PRACTICE
A HANDBOOK OF INNOVATIVE METHODS

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Dear readers,

The handbook, you have in your hands, stems from the experience of experts from five Central and Eastern European organisations: GIC NORA, Peregrina, TRANSFER Slovensko in cooperation with MyMamy, Fundacja Kobieca and Centrul Român de Politici Europene which deal with women's issues and gender equality in Poland, Slovakia, Austria, Czech Republic, and Romania. These non-governmental organisations have come together in an Erasmus + project called Let's Make the Invisible Visible to tackle a very topical issue of women facing multiple discrimination in our European society.

As experts from the aforementioned organisations know from their everyday practice, formal education methods are not adequate when working with women facing multiple discrimination. Instead, means of empowerment of vulnerable groups of women have to be applied. Thus, participatory coaching methods and drama techniques are looked into and described in detail in this publication and hands-on experience of testing the methods is also provided. Though the handbook has been prepared by experts from the above-mentioned countries, we believe that the content has no boundaries so that adult education professionals from other EU countries can benefit from the handbook.

The handbook is primarily written for career counsellors, social workers and educators dealing with diverse groups of socially disadvantaged women in the European Union. It is also aimed at those who are interested in the topic in question.

The handbook is purposefully written in a very practical way. It depicts several very concrete methods and techniques that can be used in work with the socially disadvantaged. All these methods and techniques are to empower groups of socially disadvantaged people, in our case multiple discriminated women.

Not only does the handbook describe the concrete methods, but it also reflects on the specific experiences of their application and offers tips on how to use the methods and techniques in a way that benefits the target group of socially disadvantaged women.

Some of the methods depicted in the handbook are brand new and have been developed by partner organisations. Others have been taken over as the best practice methods for working with vulnerable groups of women in

adult education and counselling. Through the list of methods and techniques presented, we foresee empowering multiple discriminated women so that their quality of life will eventually improve and their participation and engagement in our European society will increase.

We wish you an inspiring reading.

Last, but not least a few words about some formidable obstacles we had to face during this transnational Erasmus+ project.

The whole project Let's Make The Invisible Visible was carried out between 2020 – 2023 when the partners and the clients were in very challenging times. Firstly, we faced the COVID-19 pandemic but still trying to be there for our clients. *Travelling and personal meetings became much more difficult, some meetings had to be postponed. After one of the workshops, almost every participant returned home ill. Still, we found ways to contact and collaborate to finalise the project.*

And then, the even more unimaginable happened – in February 2022, a brutal military invasion in the very heart of Europe was launched by Russia. From one moment to the next, there was a war in Ukraine, the neighbouring country of almost all project partners. Many of us, both in person or through our organisations, tried our best to help, especially the women and their children fleeing the war.

Why is the development of new methods needed?

When we look at the lives of multiply discriminated women from an intersectional perspective, we find out that their lives are aggravated on several levels simultaneously. Multiple discrimination makes it very difficult to fully participate in our European society. We truly believe that education is one of the ways to help to improve the status of these women in Europe. However, the standard tools of our educational system do not seem to have brought the expected results so far. Instead, such standard educational methods in combination with social services appear to perpetuate the *status quo* of vulnerable groups and also the difficulties they face in life.

For that reason, the authors of this handbook have decided to evolve innovative and tailor-made ways, techniques and methods of education and counselling for this particular target group. The issue of multiple discrimination is inherent in all EU countries. As such, it has to be fought and tackled at local, regional, national and European levels, and also means of empowerment of vulnerable groups of women have to be applied. Last but not least, the invisible knowledge and competencies of multiple discriminated women within the EU **become visible**.

“There is always light. If only
we are brave enough to see it.”
– Amanda Gorman

HOW ARE DIFFERENT GROUPS OF WOMEN STILL DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN THE EU?

Even though gender equality was enshrined in the founding treaties of the European Economic Communities in 1957¹, women in general are still discriminated against within the EU. There is a very high percentage of women who have restricted rights or who are seen as inferior due to their ethnicity, migrant status, social class or age. In the depiction that follows we focus mainly on those discriminated groups of women with whom we work in the aforementioned project **Let's Make the Invisible Visible**.

ELDERLY WOMEN

Older women are more often at risk of poverty: during their working lives, it is more common for women to take career breaks, to work part-time and in lower-paid jobs, or to permanently withdraw from the labour market and they tend to outlive their male peers. As a result, their pension entitlements are often much lower. This means that women, in particular, face an increased risk of poverty upon reaching retirement and this risk increases

with older age. In 2018, almost one-fifth (19.1%) of women aged 75 years or more in the EU were at risk of poverty; this was 6.3 percentage points higher than the corresponding rate for men of the same age. A gender gap was also apparent for people aged 65–74, as the risk of poverty among women of this age (15.9%) was 2.8 percentage points higher than that for men of the same age.² What does this mean? In 2015, 10.7% of the elderly, aged 85 years or more, were unable to afford to spend a small amount of money on themselves (examples include going to the cinema, buying a magazine or an ice cream). This form of material deprivation was systematically more prevalent among older women than men.³

However, the risk of poverty or social exclusion does not affect only older people, but it also troubles young adults, people with a low level of educational attainment, people who experienced limitations in activities due to health problems, and unemployed persons. These groups were in 2020, on average, more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than other groups within the EU population. But the analysis by sex reveals that the risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU is higher for women (22.9%) than for men (20.9%), even in these specific groups.⁴

WOMEN EXPERIENCING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Covid-19 is called the perfect storm for domestic and partner violence by a specific combination of conditions leading to worsening results. The pandemic itself did not cause gender-based violence but it created favourable conditions to conduct violence. To minimise the spread of the pandemic, a lot of states, including the Slovak Republic, established specific measures to limit social contact by family isolation. Social isolation and control of social contacts is also a crucial part of the violent behaviour of abusive partners. Moreover, psychological stress caused by the pandemic was leading also to an increase in the consumption of alcohol and other drugs which is one of the risk factors of partnership violence.

The social services for abused women and their children were on the list of subjects of economic mobilisation by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic in April 2020. It was recommended by the Ministry that the advisory services provide their vulnerable clients with an online or telephone support, and specific quarantine spaces in every administrative region. Only three out of eight Safe Women's Houses established specific quarantine places on their premises. The result of the complicated situation was that during the pandemic

only 23 women and 32 children in all eight monitored used specific shelters for women.⁵

The growth in the need for specific services for abused women was significant during the pandemic: a 49% increase in calling the national safe women's helpline in 2020 compared with the previous year. After the first wave of anti-epidemic measures, there was a significant increase in the number of women seeking the advisory services. The reason might have been the fear of another lockdown with an abuser without any real possibility of finding help. The police statistics show a rise in criminal law cases in 2020 and 2021. In 2020 according to police statistics, there were 1700 cases of violence in close relationships, in judicial statistics, there were 1944 judicial proceedings. It is clear from the statistics that the majority of cases are those of partners violence, in 2021 there were 1413 cases of violence in close relationships, in judicial statistics, there were 1870 cases. Such decrease of nearly 17% in 2021, compared with 2020, during the pandemic is clearly connected with the perfect storm as asking for help in a situation of social isolation caused by anti-epidemic measures is extremely hard and dangerous.^{6,7}

MIGRANT WOMEN

Another vulnerable group is represented by migrants. They were statistically also at risk of poverty in the countries of the EU. In 2019 the poverty risk in this group of people was approximately twice as high for foreign citizens (32%) as it was for national citizens (15%), and it was particularly pronounced among non-EU citizens (38%). Also, the incidence of severe material deprivation in the European Union in 2019 was more than twice as high among non-EU citizens (12%) as it was among citizens of other EU Member States (5%) or national citizens (also 5%).⁸ These figures are startling and show that various forms of discrimination still exist in the EU countries. Although the differences between men and women with migrant status in terms of poverty and social exclusion are relatively small across most of the EU Member States, statistics still show that women are a more vulnerable group. A comparison between the sexes for the EU by Eurostat reveals that in 2019 the share of foreign citizens that were at risk of poverty or social exclusion was slightly higher among women (37.8%) than among men (37.4%).⁹ Other surveys show that people with ethnic minority or immigrant backgrounds (including Roma and Travellers, Muslims, Jews and people of African descent) regularly experience high levels of discrimination based on their ethnic or racial origin (as well as their religion or belief) in different areas of life. For example, in the five years preceding the respective

survey, 41% of Roma, 45% of persons with a North African background, 39% of sub-Saharan Africans, 60% of Roma and Travellers and 25% of Jews felt discriminated against because of their ethnic or immigrant background.¹⁰

At the same time, women are generally still discriminated against in the labour market. In the context of the European Union, the gender employment gap between men and women aged 20–64 is 11.7%. In the EU, 79.0% of all men are employed compared with 67.3% of women. For example, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania (countries where the three partner organisations come from) are among the states with the biggest gender employment gap. This is due to a lower participation of women in the labour markets in these countries.¹¹

Introduction of organisations involved in the Handbook development

CRPE – Romanian Center for European Policies

Romanian Center for European Policies (*in original Centrul Român de Politici Europene*), the acronym CRPE, is one of the most experienced Romanian think tanks specialised in European affairs, with over 11 years of experience in European and regional projects, especially in public policies in the field of social inclusion and anti-poverty, youth and civic participation, rural development, education and entrepreneurship, good governance, justice and foreign affairs, including Eastern Partnership (EaP) and Western Balkans. CRPE has been developing a strong in-house research capacity based on permanent staff, benefiting from the expertise of its 9 staff members and over 15 affiliated experts.

CRPE has a significant portfolio of transnational projects in the field of social policies. Within our projects that target mainly youth from vulnerable groups and focus on their inclusion, we reached more than 500 people from vulnerable groups and local stakeholders, organised more than 15 debates, workshops, roundtables, study visits, training courses, and events with relevant stakeholders at local and national levels, and wrote various policy papers that addressed the issue of social inclusion of vulnerable groups in Romania, and proposed recommendations for improving their situation at the grass-roots level.

See the official website www.crpe.ro.

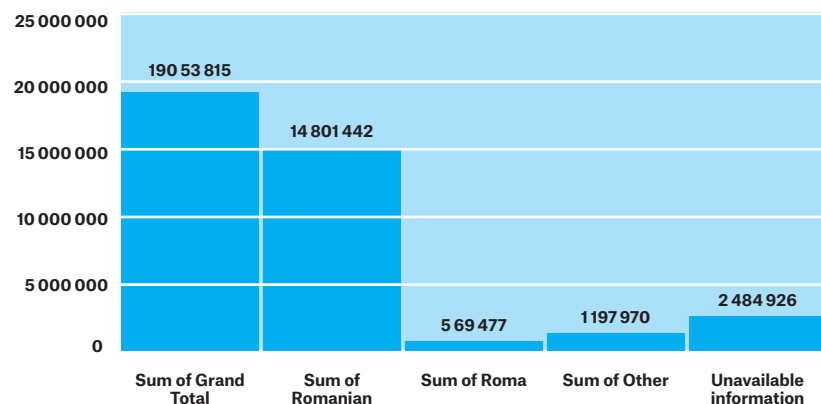
Who do we work with?

Young Roma Women

According to the 2021 Romanian census, Roma people make up about 3,4% of the Romanian population, numbering 569,477 Roma people out of 19 million. Also, it is essential not to forget that the information on ethnicity was only available for approximately 16.7 million out of the interviewed population.¹ However, since many Roma people do not declare themselves as Roma in official censuses, the number of Roma people living in Romania is estimated to be much higher. For instance, the Council of Europe estimates that approximately 1.85 million Roma live in Romania, making up 8.32% of the population.²

Young Roma women face particular problems of early childbirth and high school dropout rates due to early marriage and the belief that they should stay at home to care for younger siblings. In some aspects, there are visible differences between Roma men and women. For example, the Roma Survey states that Roma men are better informed about the existence of at least one equality body in Romania, with a higher rate of 12% compared to women.³

2021 Census Results by Ethnicity



Romanian National Institute of Statistics: *Press release First Provisional Data for the Census of Population and Housing, round 2021*

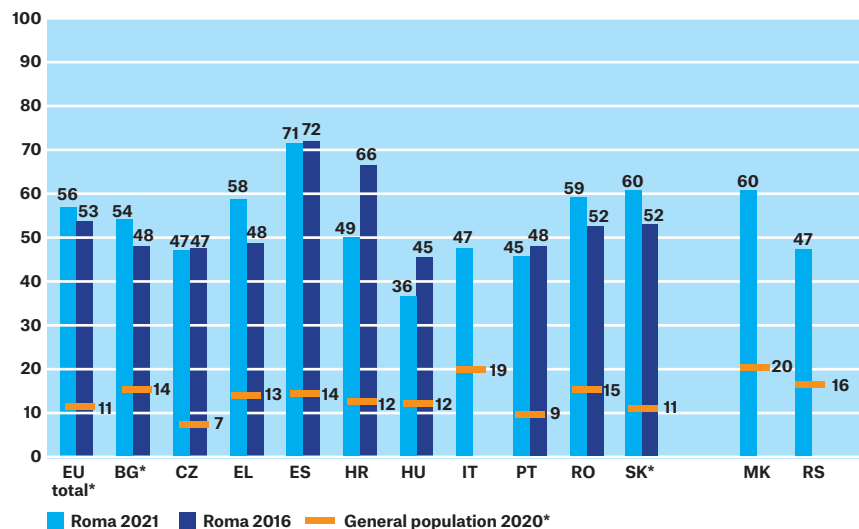
Young Roma people face a high level of poverty due to many factors, including poor education, limited opportunities in the labour market, and discrimination, all of which contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. According to the *Roma Survey from 2021*, 60% of Roma people had an income which was lower than the average annual salary in their country.⁴ Furthermore, 61% of Roma reported that their household could make ends meet with a great difficulty.⁵ The same survey reveals that 20% of the Roma felt discriminated against in crucial areas of life such as work environment, education, health, housing and in accessing other private or public facilities because of skin colour, ethnic origin, and/or religion in ten areas of life in the past 12 months.⁶

In 2020, The Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (RIES) carried out research, between June 4 and 9, 2020, by phone on an adult non-institutionalized population at the request of the Împreună Agency. Researchers concluded that public perception towards the Roma is fragmented. One out of three developed a certain level of tolerance towards the Roma, but approximately 20–30% of respondents showed accents of Romaphobia. RIES discovered that one out of ten Romanians considered the Roma people partly responsible for the spread of COVID-19. The Roma were in third place in the attribution of responsibility.⁷

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL SITUATION

According to the *Roma Survey from 2021*, 75% of Roma people aged 18 to 24 in 10 European countries were early leavers from education or vocational training.⁸ According to the same survey, compared to an average of 85% of the general population aged 20–24 in 2020 who completed at least upper secondary education, Roma people only reached a rate of 22% of completion. Moreover, only 1% of the respondents aged 30–34 completed tertiary education.⁹

11% of respondents experienced at least one form of hate-motivated harassment because of their ethnicity in the past 12 months, and 1% of them were even physically attacked because of the same reason, the survey states.¹⁰ An encouraging fact is stated by the Fundamental Rights Report (2022) regarding the fight and prevention of antigypsyism and discrimination in Romania.¹¹ In 2021, Romania adopted a law on antigypsyism which condemned the people who embrace perceptions of antigypsyism and other organisations, symbols or propagandistic materials on this subject.¹²



Young people aged 16–24 whose current main activity is 'neither in employment, education or training' (NEETs)¹⁸

In 2021, compared to an average of 71% of the general population aged 20–64 who declared their main activity status as 'paid work', Roma people only reached a rate of 41% in employment. This includes full-time, part-time, ad hoc jobs, self-employment, occasional work or work in the past four weeks.¹³

In terms of the difference in paid work rate between men and women aged 20–64, there is a 35% variance in 2021 since 59% of Roma men were employed correlated to a lower rate of 23% in Roma women.¹⁴

However, 59% of young people aged 16–24 are neither employed nor following continuous education or training.¹⁵

Finally, 23% of Roma people felt discriminated against because of being Roma when looking for a job in the past 12 months. The FRA surveys also state a saddening fact linked to a higher probability of experiencing discrimination when looking for a job as a woman¹⁷ as 30% of them addressed this compared to a rate of 22% in men.¹⁸

At the moment (the beginning of 2023), Romania is attempting to implement the *SFC2021 Program* supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), which is targeting the socio-economic integration of marginalised

communities, especially the Roma people.¹⁹ The main strategic document provided by the Ministry of Investments and European projects states that Romania does not possess a framework of national strategic policy on the inclusion of the Roma people. Surprisingly, Romania does instead own a framework for national monitoring methods, evaluation and review of measures of Roma integration which can be found in the *Government's decision to adopt The strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027*.²⁰

ISSUES THEY FACE

Across the 11 EU Member States surveyed, including Romania, the EU FRA's 2011 Roma Survey found that the situation of Roma women in core areas of social life, such as education and employment, is worse compared to that of Roma men.

Even from an early age, there is quite a notable inequality between Roma boys and Roma girls. In Romania, 80% of Roma girls are enrolled in compulsory schooling (age 5–18) compared to 86% of boys. A similar tendency is reflected in education dropout rates: 76% of women aged 18–24 and 73% of men.²¹

Because of poverty and traditions such as early marriage and the belief that girls should care for younger siblings, Roma girls, on average, might leave education to contribute to the household in some way. Thus, they are not encouraged by their families to pursue long-term education and training programmes.

There is also a significant difference between Roma men and women aged 20–64 who declared their primary activity status as 'paid work': 23% of women versus 59% of men. Also, a lot more women are 'neither in employment, education or training' (75%) compared to men (43%).²²

The lack of education means many Roma women leave school illiterate and unskilled so they can only secure jobs for minimal pay. It means many Roma women are vulnerable to domestic violence, and many are pushed into sex work to make ends meet, especially if they are left by their husbands and become single mothers.

Fundacja Kobieca

Fundacja Kobieca (in English: Women's Foundation), the acronym eFKa, an operating foundation, has been in existence since 1991. Its mission is to support the independence and solidarity of women, to act against discrimination towards women and to support women's culture. It is located in one of the biggest university cities in Poland – Cracow – which is an old centre of culture.

eFKa is active at local, national and European levels. Nationally, eFKa is known as an editor of the only Polish feminist magazine “Zadra” (issued twice a year for 18 years till 2018) and for its educational projects such as Gender Training for Trainers or WenDo Training for Trainers, Academy of Tolerance or Academy of Critical Writing. We initiated the Wen-Do Training of Assertivity and Self-Defence for Women dedicated to female trainers to enable spreading the skills across the country. At the European level, eFKa has been dealing with an international women's movement, its history and its past as well as with other issues affecting women such as war, mass displacements, migration, and transformation.

For 10 years, eFKa and its collaborators had been developing the competence of combining a biographical method of adult education and methods of oral history which came as the biographical-historical Jump Over the Walls (JOW) workshops. They aim to increase sensibility towards discrimination and empowering women. eFKa has been working in that way with young and older women and with migrants. In the JOW workshops, elderly women not only learn and overcome their isolation, but they can also experience recognition as “witnesses of history”.

See the official website www.efka.org.pl.

Who do we work with? Elderly Women

“Ladies, don't let anybody tell you you are ever past your prime!”

– Michelle Yeoh, a 60-year-old best female Oscar winner 2022

Currently, every fifth EU citizen is over 65 years old. In most European countries, in the last 20 years, the average percentage of elderly inhabitants grew by almost 5%.¹

Globally, the population aged 65 and over is growing faster than all other age groups. According to data from World Population Prospects: the 2019 Revision, by 2050, one in six people in the world will be over age 65 (16%), up from one in 11 in 2019 (9%). By 2050, one in four persons living in Europe and Northern America could be aged 65 or over.²

UNO declared the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030),³ which should be an opportunity to bring together governments, civil society, international agencies, professionals, academia, the media, and the private sector to act together for improving the lives of older people. The concept of healthy ageing includes five key domains of functional ability.⁴ These are the abilities to: (1) meet basic needs, (2) learn, grow and make decisions, (3) be mobile, (4) build and maintain relationships and (5) contribute to society.

Older persons should be able to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms when residing in any shelter, care or treatment facility, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy and for the right to make decisions about their care and the quality of their lives.

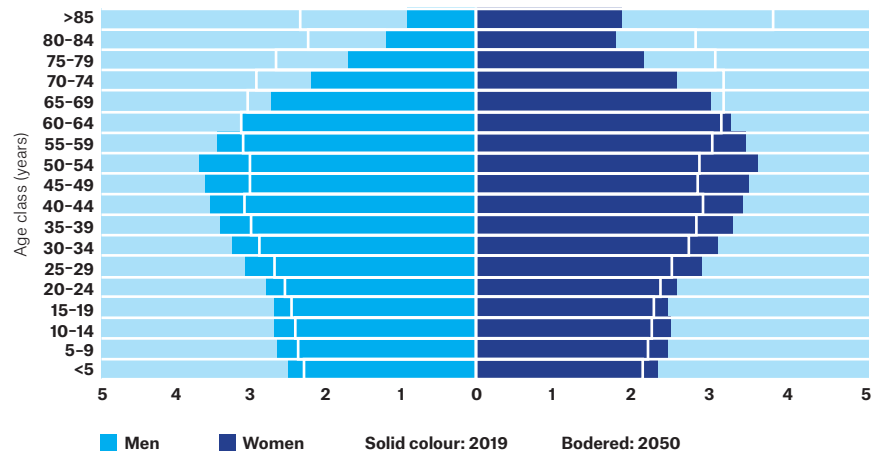
Although the Polish society, in European comparison, is relatively “young”, it has been facing an increase in the number of older adults. The phenomenon of population ageing is a consequence of a low birth rate and a longer life in comparison with the former generations.

ISSUES THEY FACE

At the end of 2019, the population of Poland stood at 38.4 million citizens of which 9.7 mln accounted for people above 60 years old (25% of

Population pyramids, EU-27, 2019 and 2050

(% share of total population)



Population pyramids, EU-27, 2019 and 2050 (% share of total population).⁵

the whole population). Furthermore, the index of death in group 60–64 is higher among men (19.2) than women (8.2) and it gets higher with age (in group 80–84, men 86.7 vs. women 55.8).⁴ This so-called feminisation of ageing results in the fact that in Poland, statistically, women live about 8 years longer than men. In the EU in 2019, there were more than twice as many very old women (aged 85 years or more) as very old men.

The “feminisation of poverty” means that women have a higher incidence of poverty than men, that their poverty is more severe than that of men, and that poverty among women is on the increase. An example among senior women in Poland is the case of lower pensions. Childcare as well as caring for an elder parent or an ill spouse are culturally assigned to the woman. It is expected that women deal with the social care of their family members without any financial recognition. In consequence, their years of service are short and an average pension of a woman accounts for only 66% of a man’s.⁶ Moreover, in a household of two, after the death of the spouse, the woman can only count on her precarious pension which is barely sufficient, or not, to cover basic needs.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STEREOTYPES

To overcome the exclusion, intellectual incompetence, clumsiness, incompatibility and lack of interest in social life are the most common

stereotypes senior citizens deal with on a daily basis. Moreover, they frequently carry the stigma of very common illnesses the elderly suffer from, for example dementia. Female seniors experience additionally the excluding consequences of the cult of beauty and youth as the visibility of senior women, and particularly older women from marginal groups, is scarce⁷. And yet, very often older people are portrayed negatively in media and social media. These stereotypical behaviours lead to a false perception of the elderly by the society and ageism⁸. As a consequence of the stereotypes, seniors might withdraw their attendance in social and cultural life as they feel a lack of openness and acceptance.⁹

Poland carries out a variety of programmes to activate the 60+ generation such as senior clubs operating in local communities across the whole country, Universities of Third age available to any senior regardless of their educational and financial background, and a number of governmental and European projects focusing on activation and inclusion. However, in rural areas and municipalities below 5 000 inhabitants, the promotion of such activities is very poor; in 2019 only 7% of offers were funded by the governmental Senior Activation Programme.¹⁰ The general participation in the socio-cultural life of seniors is also very low. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office, in 2018 only 27% of seniors declared visiting a cinema or a museum. With regard to physical activity, 27.7% of men above 60 declared doing sport regularly versus 23% of women.¹¹

VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST THE ELDERLY

The invisibility of older women makes them weak and helpless. They are victims of violence of a different kind. Since the perpetrators are mostly family members or caretakers, it is not easy to investigate the real scale of that problem. Nevertheless, the estimations at the European level reveal that every 6th older person, 60+, experienced violence.^{12, 13} The most common forms of abuse are: discrimination in the public sphere, language and employment discrimination, isolation, neglect, financial exploitation, physical and psychological violence, and the withholding of basic needs.¹⁴

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many practices were abusive towards the elderly such as refusal to hospitalise older people and their de-prioritisation in access to care or limited access to proper treatments. It showed that seniors were particularly vulnerable, and that they need much more attention as well as protection.

Genderové Informační Centrum NORA

Genderové Informační Centrum NORA^A (in English: The Gender Information Centre NORA) is a Czech non-governmental non-profit organisation established in 2004 and located in Brno. Its establishment was initiated by students and teachers from the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University in Brno. The organisation's goal was to expand gender activities outwards from the academic environment.

Since that time NORA has built its activities on a feminist approach and has dealt with gender equality-focused issues. Its mission is to promote and support equality between men and women in society at international, national and regional levels as well as to improve the lives of socially disadvantaged groups of women in Czech society. NORA's activities are project-based. NORA has inter alia implemented projects focusing on gender-sensitive education or competence mapping, promoting gender equality in the labour market or aiming to eliminate discrimination against ethnic minorities.

At present, the Gender Information Centre NORA also aims to improve the conditions and access of women and men to social capital in various areas of their lives and to increase the opportunities for women's personal and professional realisation. In this field, GIC Nora performs gender audits of companies and institutions in the public and private spheres. GIC NORA has been conducting training courses in a wide range of gender topics in educational institutions, ministries and low-threshold centres.

See the official website www.gendernora.cz.

^A The name NORA is inspired by the name of the heroine from Henrik Ibsen's book from 1879. At that time, the social status of women was clear – they were only wives and mothers. However, Nora felt that she had the right to be herself, so she decided to go against all conventions and find out who she wanted to be.

Who do we work with? *Homeless Women*

*"If you go anywhere, even paradise,
you will miss your home."
– Malala Yousafzai*

Homeless women are one of the most socially disadvantaged groups of women which can be found all around the world. The situation in the Czech Republic is similar to most European countries, and also to the countries where the partner organisations are from.

It is very complicated to count every homeless person, especially women. The reason is that women more often belong to the group of the "hidden homeless". They usually stay in a private property, for example at their friend's houses or they remain in violent and unsatisfactory relationships or create purposeful short-term relationships. According to current estimates and surveys, around 23 830 people are homeless in the Czech Republic, of which 20% are women. The share of women in shelters is higher, about 30% of homeless people who live in shelters are women.¹

According a research conducted by the Polish government, there were around 33 408 homeless people in February 2017, however, this data is considered incorrect and the real number may be much higher. Also, around 25% of the homeless had been in the same situation for over 10 years, which means that the average length of homelessness is on the rise.² There is also a similar situation in Slovakia. There is currently no regular survey of the number of homeless people in Slovakia. But an official Population and Housing Census by Statistical Office of Slovakia in 2011, reveals the number of 23 483 homeless people, while not focusing on

COUNTRY AND YEAR OF FINDINGS	HOMELESS AS % OF TOTAL POPULATION
Austria (2019)	0.25
Czech Republic (2019)	0.22
Germany (2018)	0.41
Hungary (2014)	0.10
Poland (2019)	0.08
Romania (2013)	0.07
Slovakia (2011)	0.44
Slovenia (2019)	0.18

Graph of percentage of homeless people in partner countries and other Central European countries.^{6,7}

people sleeping on the street. Therefore, this figure could be considered as the minimum number of homeless people in Slovakia.³ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the resulting worsening economic situation of people, this figure has increased to an estimated 27 000 homeless people, which is one of the highest numbers in the EU countries if we use the methodology of the number of homeless people per 10 000 inhabitants. In Austria, there were 15 thousand people registered as homeless in 2016, but this number does not include rough sleepers who are not registered. Around 70% of all people experiencing homelessness live in Vienna.⁴

But the truth is that homelessness is often an overlooked issue. This became very clear when looking for data. A lot of countries have none or very old data on this topic. A lot of countries do not collect data on the number of homeless people on a regular basis, and gender-based data are even less available. For example, in Romania, which is one of the partner countries, no national statistics on homelessness are collected. The only study was conducted in 2004 when the homeless population was estimated from 14 000 to 15 000 people. In Bucharest alone, there were approximately 6 000 homeless people, including one thousand children.⁵

ISSUES THEY FACE

Homelessness and housing deprivation are perhaps the most extreme examples of poverty and social exclusion in society today. The marginalisation associated with homelessness brings social stigmatisation because the majority of society considers living on the streets to be a clearly negative deviation from the norm.

However, there are specific obstacles that only homeless women face and which make this group more vulnerable than a group of homeless men or otherwise discriminated women. Women's homelessness is often caused by several factors or events. Loss of home or housing is in most cases the result of a combination of several causes, for example: domestic and other forms of violence, traumatic change in life such as the death of a child or partner, age and gender discrimination in the labour market, feminisation of poverty, alcohol dependence, family history of social exclusion, serious psychiatric illness.⁸

There is also a huge problem which affects all homeless women. In general, the street environment is more dangerous for women than for men. Due to physical dispositions, women are predominantly vulnerable to victimisation and exposed to more frequent attacks of physical, sexual and verbal

violence by men. The same trend applies to homeless women. As a result, many women are forced to trade themselves for a safe place to sleep (and they persist in unsatisfactory relationships). Also, they have a lower economic power.⁹

In the past, GIC NORA implemented a project focusing on gender-based violence among homeless people. Gender-based violence is a widespread phenomenon, but this particular group is often excluded from its preventing and combating, for example, because of the low capacity of social services targeting homeless women (they are often overcrowded and waiting lists are long).¹⁰ In this project, GIC NORA worked with a group of homeless women to whom a safe space was offered to share their experiences with partner violence. The topic of gender-based violence was opened in a delicate manner as part of leisure and art activities.

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL SITUATION

Based on this project, a team of experts from GIC NORA discovered that it was appropriate to use non-formal learning methods when working with homeless women and to open important or sensitive topics in an alternative way. This proved to be one of the best ways to get the desired results. In the case of homeless women, the elaboration of various assigned tasks after direct work with the client or meeting the deadline is very problematic.

Workshop with homeless women using non-formal learning activities
Photo: Archive of GIC NORA, 2022



PEREGRINA

“Migration is both a crisis and an opportunity.”
– Gamze Ongan, former Peregrina chairwoman

Peregrina, located in Vienna, is one of the first Austrian NGOs, self-organised by migrant women in Austria. Founded in 1984 as the “Association of Women from Turkey and Austria in Solidarity” this organisation initially offered German language and typing courses, fabric painting and learning support for children. In the course of its existence, Peregrina has been constantly developing and expanding, and now offers a diverse range of services aiming to support and empower women.

With a professional, multilingual team of lawyers, psychologists, language trainers, social and career counsellors and childcare staff, the organisation offers legal and social counselling, psychological support, career guidance, German language courses and other educational measures. The services are aimed exclusively at women and girls above the age of 16 from countries all over the world, who need consulting or care due to their precarious living situation, psychological stress or multiple discriminations.

Peregrina creates spaces for mutual respectful interaction. The counselling services are multilingual, free of charge and – if required – anonymous; the German language courses offer childcare and are very affordable or even for free. The approach in all services is holistic, low-threshold, needs – and resource-oriented. Improving women’s quality of life, fairness and empowerment are the main objectives of Peregrina.

This women’s organisation represents the interests of migrants, both in cooperation with other organisations and through public and political lobbying. Peregrina was also the first migrant organisation in Austria to commit to environmental protection back in 2014. This is not only implemented in educational programs but also in everyday office life.

The migrant women’s multilingualism, life experience and informal education are seen as important resources as much as formal qualifications. Powerful relations and different realities of life, both in the society and between a consultant and a client, are critically reflected upon.



The interdisciplinary team of Peregrina
Photo: Andrea Freiburger; archive of Peregrina

Peregrina’s work is characterised by a wide range of methods, e.g. in the field of education and counselling among others: storytelling, working with authentic texts, pictures and films, role-playing, outdoor consulting or stress management training. In order to tailor the methods to the needs of women, the techniques are constantly being developed and adapted. Quality standards and compliance with feminist and anti-racist principles are ensured not only through a variety of methods and further trainings of the employees, but also through a continuous reflection of the work by peer consulting and supervision.

See official website www.peregrina.at.

Who do we work with?

Migrant women

Austria is a country of immigration. With around 12 people per 1.000 inhabitants who immigrated in 2019, Austria ranks 11th within the EU, i.e. in the upper midfield.¹ At the same time, very few people in Austria (13%) see immigration also as a chance for further development of the country.² Therefore, this target group needs to show not only their problems but also their potential.

Every fifth woman in Austria, in total more than 900.000 persons, was born abroad.⁴ About a half of these women immigrated from EU countries (*incl. EFTA*^B), women from Germany are most strongly represented, followed by Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. These women have largely the same rights regarding social welfare and the right of residence as Austrian citizens due to the EU Freedom of Movement Regulation.⁵ Nevertheless, many of these women are disadvantaged in Austria, especially in the labour market.

A slightly larger half, or almost 500.000 women, were born in *third countries*, most of them in Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by Turkey and Serbia. The most common non-European countries of origin are Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, China and the Russian Federation.^{6,7}

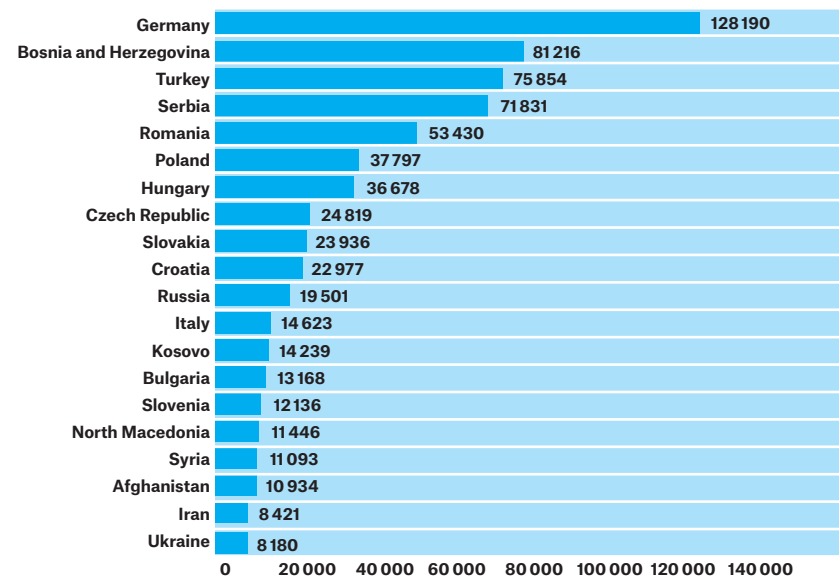
Despite the anti-discrimination laws these women face multiple disadvantages due to their origin, appearance and religion in their daily lives. Their certificates, diplomas and other evidence of formal education are not being recognized in Austria, their wages are lower, their housing conditions are worse and they also suffer from their unequal legal status in the areas of residence and social affairs.

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL SITUATION

Migrant women in Austria are a very heterogeneous group in terms of their educational qualifications and their occupational biographies. More than 30% of women, having immigrated from EU countries and also from many other countries outside Europe, hold a university degree, while the

^B The European Free Trade Association is formed by four countries: Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Austria: Female Foreign Population by Citizenship



Austria: female foreign population by citizenship.³

proportion for Austrian women with these educational degrees is less than 20%.⁸ But the potentials of these well-educated women, unfortunately, remain too often unused. They are in many cases affected by disqualification and have to accept jobs below their qualifications. Migrant women, however, are disproportionately represented not only among the highest educational qualifications but also among the lowest. These women, who were educationally disadvantaged in their countries of origin (e.g. in Turkey or Afghanistan), find it difficult to make up for missing educational qualifications in Austria. Thereby, they have only poor opportunities in the labour market.

The unemployment rate among women of foreign nationality in 2020 was at 17%, which is more than twice as high as that of Austrian nationals (8%), and particularly high among women from Syria (70%) and Afghanistan (58%). There are also large differences in income – foreign women earned only 82% of the net annual income of Austrian women in 2020, and it must be additionally taken into account that Austria is already one of the countries in the EU with the widest gender pay gap of almost 20%. This means that they are twice as vulnerable to poverty as Austrian women.⁹



Women from Afghanistan during a Workshop in Peregrina
Photo: Georgia Sever

TRANSFER Slovensko / Mymamy

The company TRANSFER Slovensko spol. s.r.o. (in English: TRANSFER Slovakia Ltd.) was founded in 1994 as a private Slovak educational institution. The company's purpose and mission are to provide an integrated system of human resources services by covering four areas which constitute the company's core products: training programmes, consulting activities, national projects and international projects. Training programmes are directed towards the acquisition and enhancement of managerial skills in areas such as communication, leadership, teamwork, personal and professional development, etc.

At the same time, the company is a full member of the Association of Adult Education Institutions in the Slovak Republic. Among the current customers are major international companies, local Slovak companies including SMEs as well as state and public service institutions. The main target groups are managers, teachers, unemployed young people, and visually impaired and discriminated people such as Roma women who are the main and largest group of discriminated women in Slovakia.

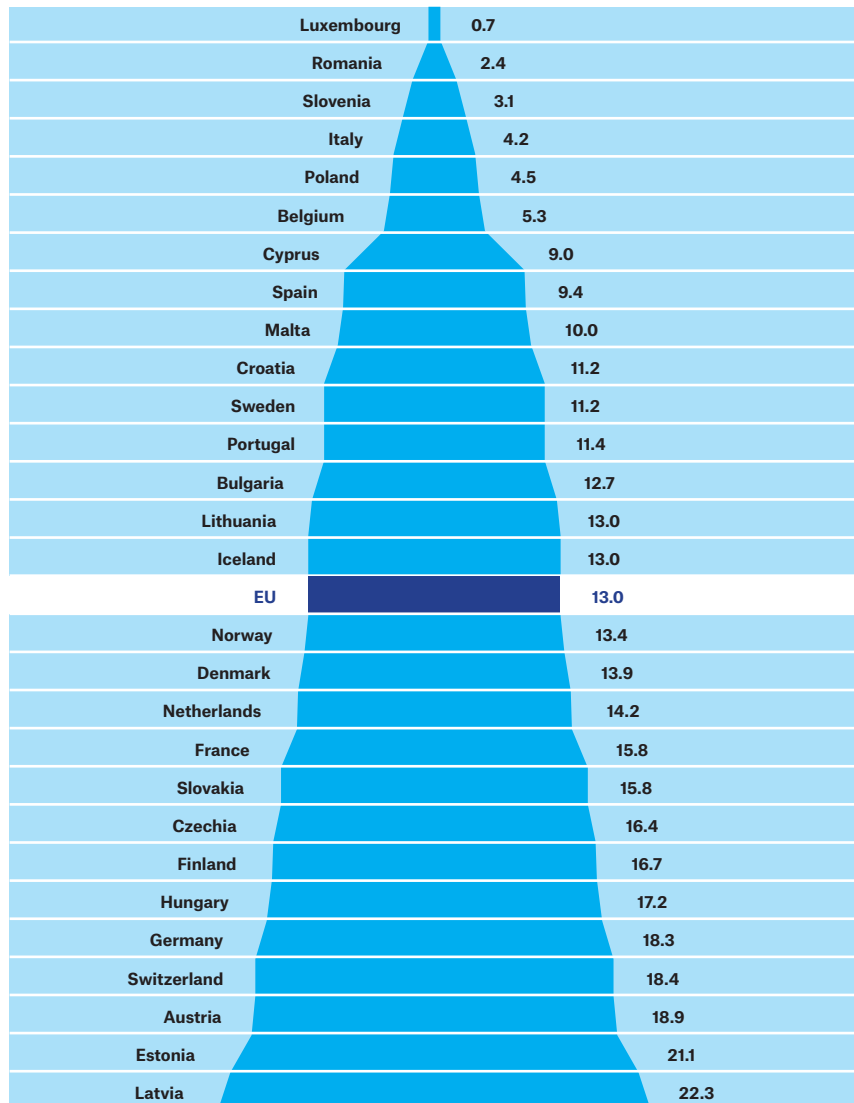
See the official website: www.transfer.sk/index.htm.

In the project Let's Make the Invisible Visible, the company TRANSFER Slovensko established cooperation with another Slovak organisation called MyMamy, because of its expert work with groups of vulnerable women.

MyMamy (translated as: WeMothers) was originally founded in 2000 as a support group for women on maternity leave. The active members of the association eventually managed to establish one of the first maternity centres in Slovakia. As part of the centre's activities and during meetings of its members the need to establish services for women experiencing violent relationships became apparent. A separate organisational component was established in 2003. MyMamy has been registered as a social service provider of basic social counselling and emergency shelter provision in the Prešov Self-Governing Region since 2009. The main goal of the organisation is to provide complex services for women experiencing violence in relationships and also for their children such as empowering women, eliminating the effects of violence, helping the availability of effective assistance,

Gender pay gap: How much less do women earn than men?

Difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees
as % of male gross earnings, 2020



Iceland, Norway, Switzerland: non-EU countries.
For all countries except Czechia and Iceland: data for enterprises employing 10 or more employees.
Czechia and Iceland: data for enterprises employing 1 or more employees.
Ireland, Greece: data not available.

supporting and spreading the principles of gender equality in society, and working to eliminate violence in relationships. To reach the goal, MyMamy offers the following services – basic and specialised social counselling, crisis intervention and counselling, social assistance, legal counselling and representation, psychological counselling for the clients and their children, support groups, specialised tutoring for the client’s children, and housing in the Women’s Safe House MyMamy.

See the official website www.mymamy.sk.

Who do we work with?

Women Experiencing Violence in Intimate Relationships

“I don't want to be remembered as the girl who was shot. I want to be remembered as the girl who stood up.”
– Malala Yousafzai

21% of women ages 18–65 experienced violence from their intimate partner, i.e. every 5th woman in Slovakia experienced gender-based violence. The violence from the former partner is even higher: 28% out of 21% experienced severe violence. The results from the representative research of the Institute of Labour and Family show that:

- One-fourth of women have experienced violence from their former partner and 12% from current partner;
- Every third Slovak woman has experienced violence from a man;
- Only 12% of women mentioned that case of the most severe violence was solved by the police.¹

In 2014, 8% of European women experienced some kind of violence during the last 12 months. In Slovakia, 23% of women at the age of 15–75 experienced violence from a current and/or former partner and 34% of women experienced violence from a partner or/and a man.²

There are no specific statistics on multiple discrimination as there are no special figures of Roma clients, not only in our organisation's statistics but also at national level as it would be considered a discrimination act to specify abused women's ethnicity. According to the statistics of MyMamy, the rate of Roma clients is lower, so is the prevalence of domestic abuse in the Roma community. The reason can be seen in a high rate of acceptance of the violent behaviour in Roma culture and also the segregation of Roma settlements which means a lower level of accessibility of services. Based on the internal statistics of the organisation MyMamy, there are approx. 100 women of multiple discrimination, which is nearly a quarter of the total number of clients. This includes clients who are discriminated against

based on their ethnicity and also on their disabilities and different sexual orientation. This number can be, according to our expertise, the mirror of the total number of multiple discriminated women from all women in Slovakia facing gender-based violence.

Potentials of the target groups

**“Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness.”
– Oprah Winfrey, TV host and producer**

The target groups of the project are very heterogeneous. Nevertheless, their multiple discrimination results in similar problems, e.g. precarious financial situation, no possibility of further education, unemployment, higher risk of violence, social isolation, poor health, etc. On the other hand, too little attention is paid to the fact that women who have experienced many crises and difficult life situations have also developed certain strengths, resilience, flexibility and potentials such as managing life with little resources or coping with extraordinary stress. In addition, every woman has not only formal but also a lot of informal competencies. Unfortunately, these often remain hidden because of discrimination and the precarious living situation they often face. Of course, these potentials vary greatly from individual to individual, but there are also group-specific ones in particular target groups.

Migrant women, for example, bring with them multilingualism, transcultural competencies, adaptability and flexibility, in some cases also high professional qualifications from their home countries and often a high will and motivation to succeed in their new home country. If cooperation between them and municipalities was established, they could help other migrants with their integration and also help the receiving states by creating equal structural conditions to ensure that the potential of the migrants is harnessed.

Older people have diverse and broad knowledge of different areas of life, e.g. health issues or dealing with grief and loss, a lot of experience with different social and professional roles and also historical and practical knowledge of how to cope with crises and emergencies, e.g. in war, pandemics or resource shortages. They can be supportive of younger generations with their biographical knowledge and with their distance from the most current events. Their stories about history and their oral histories make the past alive. They can enormously contribute to making social connections stronger and more supportive for younger generations. Usually, they also have much more time than people in the productive age and time is an important resource in our current society.

Roma people do not have only a very rich cultural heritage, they also account for more than one-fifth of new entrants to the labour market in Romania. As they represent a growing proportion of the European

workforce, improving Roma's access to education would provide huge benefits to the national economy, especially when considering the high emigration rates Romania is facing.¹ It would also improve diversity, avoid homogenous structures and illustrate society's openness and inclusion of people from all ethnic backgrounds.

Similarly, homeless women also have a lot of unused potential. As they have gone mostly through a wide variety of life experiences, especially homelessness, they have the strength and knowledge of how to survive in poor and constantly changing living conditions. With these experiences they can become peer workers to help with the prevention of becoming homeless. If cooperation between them and municipalities was established, they could help the city or the state approach homeless people and homelessness in general. Their inside would enable to shape structural conditions not only to prevent homelessness but also to help the homeless integrate in the society.

Domestic violence is often associated with low educational and social status and it is a problem that occurs in all social strata. Women confronting domestic violence, thus, have many different potentials that have been lost or could not be realised due to their precarious life situation: These include educational qualifications, social skills, work experience and social engagement. Thus, it is essential for the self-esteem of these women and their way to an independent life that their potentials be realised. At the same time, it is also important for society to see the discriminated women as strong and remarkable people rather than victims or a problem.

The societies of the EU are currently facing many challenges: globalisation, digitalisation, skills shortages, an increase in mental health problems, climate change, growing nationalism, and last but not least, a brutal war at its doorstep and an economic crisis resulting from it. Women from the target groups of this project have a high potential to contribute to overcoming these problems. Let's make the invisible visible – both the problems of the multiple discrimination against women as well as their often overlooked potential.

Innovative training methods and coaching techniques

AN OVERVIEW OF THE METHODS, WHICH ARE DETAILED BELOW:

METHOD	INDIVIDUAL / GROUP SETTING	TARGET GROUP	TIME	REQUIREMENTS	TOPICS	COUNSELLOR'S EXPERIENCE	ADOPTION OF THE METHOD
THE THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED	A group (around 10-15 people max)	All target groups who are discriminated against	From 3 hours to several weeks	Big room, green and red cards, mask	All topics. The Theatre of the Oppressed can be built on every reasons of oppression	Training / experience needed	Possibility of use only few activities (e.g. warm-ups). Read and try for counsellors with the Theatre of the Oppressed experience
WE ARE ON THE SAME BOAT	a group	All target groups. From students to social workers, counsellors, etc., as a part of prevention activities	Around 3 hours	Safe space, private room, mobile phone with a camera, printer, markers, glue, white paper and a pair of scissors, tape, flipchart, toilette paper	Gender-based violence	Experience needed	Read and try counsellors with experience in topic of gender-based violence
WALK AND TALK	Normally for one client, but also two clients are possible	All, but physical handicapped people need adaption of the method to their needs	Counselling time: average of one hour; preparation and follow-up time also needed	Quiet route, not wet weather, joy in walking	All, but not topics which have to be written down or which are very sensitive to discuss outdoor	Experience needed	Read and try
BREAD BAKING	Group of 6-8 persons, but also possible to do it for individual counsellings	All target groups	Counselling process time: three hours preparation and follow-up time also needed	Tables, Oven, Ingredients for making bread	Best suitable for career orientation but it can also be used in other contexts	Experience needed	Read and try for counsellors with bread baking experience
JUMP OVER THE WALLS: NARRATIVE TRIANGLE	Group, if possible, divided by 3 (12-15 participants)	All target groups	An hour and a half	Quiet space inside, a bigger room for sub-groups of three participants each.	All topics	The educator has to have experience with narrative interviews.	Read and try for educators with experience with narrative interviews.
JUMP OVER THE WALLS: HISTORY OF MY NAME	A group (12-15 participants)	All target groups. Especially useful when the participants differ by nationality/ culture and age	Around 20 minutes	No requirements	Very good both as memory work, and as an unit, useful in the beginning of the workshop, to remember names of participants	No special experience	Read and try
JUMP OVER THE WALLS: MY FOOD BIOGRAPHY	A group	All target groups	Around 3 hours	A broad, quiet space, tables, paper and pens to write and draw	Memory work	No special experience	Read and try
JUMP OVER THE WALLS: RIVER OF TIME	A bigger group (from 8 to 30, even more, participants)	If possible with both younger, as well as with elder participants	Around 2 hours	Bigger space, some preparations, such as: a line on the wall (min. 3 meters long) and cards with dates, events and names	Learning about history, memory work, recognition for the older participants, gaining the feeling of belonging to a bigger group and process / not being alone	Experience as adult educator needed	Read and try
BIBLIOTHERAPY	Individual and group settings	All target groups	1-3 hours, depending on the topics and the group	A room to act as a meeting space for the counsellor and client/s. Appropriate literature and books suited to the client's needs.	Depending on the clients' needs	No special experience	Read and try
EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH GROUP ACTIVITIES	A group from 3 to 12 participants	All target groups	1-3 hours, depending on the topics and the group	A room with the possibility to sit in a circle	Depending on the clients' needs	No special experience	Read and try
ART AS A TECHNIQUE TO EMPOWER PEOPLE	Individual and group settings	All target groups	1 hour	Art materials can include paper, paint, colouring pens, canvas, water, camera	Depending on the clients' preferences	No special experience	Read and try
COMPETENCE KALEIDOSCOPE COURSE AT WORK	A group	People who need a career restart	The course consists of 32 hours divided into eight modules	Materials have to be printed before the activities	Best suitable for career orientation and self-confidence building	Training / experience needed	Possibility of use only few activities. Read and try for counsellors with the Competence Kaleidoscope experience

The Theatre of the Oppressed

“Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future rather than just waiting for it.”
– Augusto Boal

WHY IS THIS METHOD WORTH TRYING?

This method allows you to open up difficult topics in a safe environment. It is up to the clients to find a solution to the problem, which makes this method all the more effective. At the same time, the target group can exchange their practice in solving a common problem.

CONTEXT OF THE METHOD

Traditional formal training courses do not work that well with vulnerable groups of women. For that reason, we have decided to choose a more alternative way of teaching which can be even more entertaining and yet just as beneficial. Theatre can be used not only to convey aesthetic experience and artistic values but it can also aim to make a more “practical” use of drama, which can be defined as either an educational tool or a treatment tool.¹ In the project Let’s Make the Invisible Visible, we explore the world of drama techniques in order to identify methods of empowering and enabling women who are discriminated against on multiple grounds. Stories that allow participants to explore a subject through drama-based methods and techniques at an emotional level can be a powerful pedagogical tool for exposing stereotypical behaviour or opening new paths to deal with problematic situations in life.

There is a really large number of dramatic techniques and each has its own specific use. In the case of working with a group of multiple discriminated women, one of the best ways is to apply the dramatic method called **the Theatre of the Oppressed**.

The Theatre of the Oppressed (also known as Forum Theatre) is one of the techniques of Augusto Boal’s Theatre, which can be characterised as means of both education and treatment. Boal’s techniques use theatre as a way of promoting social transformation/change. The Theatre of the

Oppressed is intended for **spect-actors**^C who suffer from any form of oppression from social and physical (exploitation, abuse of power, racism, sexism, xenophobia, domestic violence, etc.) to psychological oppression (phobias, anxiety, loneliness, communication inability, etc.). The main goal is not only to teach spect-actors to think and be aware of a specific form of their oppression but also to actively (and on stage) test the process leading to a change.² It is in fact the concept of “theatre in theatre” where several clients play a story and others watch them as spectators. Any spect-actor can stop the play at any time or enter the action, take on the role of the main character and continue the story as they see suitable, etc.³

Thanks to the intervention of a spect-actor, everybody can experience how their own ideas and solutions work. Participants can significantly influence the development of a short scene which is more or less “tailored” to the issue/s of the location where it is performed.

FOR WHOM IS THIS METHOD SUITABLE?

The Theatre of the Oppressed is a theatre just for the oppressed people. No matter where the play takes place, it is necessary that it be played only by the oppressed people. Regardless of the area of life they are discriminated against, but it is necessary to give space for expression to people who do not have space or do not feel safe in other situations and interactions.

APPLICATION OF DRAMA TECHNIQUES IN EDUCATION - STEP BY STEP

1. Warm-up

Before the very beginning of the technique of the Theatre of the Oppressed, it is necessary for all group members to tune into one another. Thanks to the evolving group dynamics, the group will be more cohesive, it is easier to form and maintain a “safe space”, where the participants will have less difficulty expressing themselves and, above all, the subsequent activities will have a greater effect.

^C In the terminology of Forum Theatre invented by a Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal, people are called “spect-actors”. This term was created to refer to the dual role of those involved in the process as both a spectator and actor, as they both observe and create dramatic meaning and action in any performance. (Ibid.) This term will now be used also in this handbook when we refer to all participants involved in the Theatre of the Oppressed. However, sometimes we also use the term “spectator” when we refer to people who are currently sitting and watching a short scene or the term “actor/actress” when we refer to people who are currently on stage playing a short scene.

There are a large number of warm-up activities. We will present only a few of them in the handbook, but this list is sufficient. However, each career counsellor, social worker or educator can choose any warm-up activity that suits them.⁴

Also, it is possible to combine warm-up activities with other methods or when you want to get to know each other in a group, regardless of the following activities.

SOCIOMETRIC ACTIVITIES

- Sociometric activities are useful to get the members of the group to get to know each other better. The goal of the activity is for the participants to line up according to a simple key that you assign. In a more difficult version, it is possible to collaborate without speaking.
- The easiest task to assign to participants to make them understand the activity – tell participants to line up according to their height from the smallest one to the tallest one.
- Then change the assignment. Tell the participants to line up according to age/number of children / according to a distance of the place of residence / the length of their hair / etc. If the correct alignment is not obvious at first glance, it is necessary to check it by asking. Thus, it is possible to gain some information about the participants and open them up.
- Warning: This activity has to be used carefully, especially with vulnerable groups. An ill-considered choice of a criterion could be unpleasant for participants, especially for the people on the ends of the lines.

Another aim of sociometric activities is to learn more about the participants' inner experiences.

- On the floor, mark the scale that has “the best / the most” at one end (can be expressed, for example, by the symbol + ☺ ✓) and “the worst / the least” at the other end (– ☹ ✗).
- Tell the participants to stand on the scale according to their mood / how they slept / how they look forward to the workshop / etc. Participants stand at their own discretion and do not compare with others.
- Then, it is possible to ask the participants if they want to say something about where they stand.

THE CONDUCTOR

- Make a circle. One volunteer will go behind the door. Among the other participants, identify the so-called conductor.
- The task of everyone else is to continuously imitate the movements of the conductor and bearing in mind to copy them inconspicuously.
- Call the volunteer. Her job is to observe the group in the circle and determine who the conductor is.

MOVE AND SOUND

It is a funny and quick activity which should energise participants.

- Make a circle. One of the participants starts and does a move accompanied by a sound. It could be totally meaningless. Every other person repeats this move and sound at the same time.
- This activity finishes when everybody in the circle invents and does their own move and sound. It is better to follow a faster rhythm of showing and repeating.

LIFTING UP THE FRAGILE RING

- Make a circle. Imagine that there is a very fragile ring next to your feet inside of the circle.
- Lift up this fragile ring above your head. It is necessary to act slowly and cooperate with other participants. Be careful! The ring can easily break.

THE CIRCLE REDUCTION

- Make a big circle. The aim of this activity is to make this circle as small as possible. But two people cannot make a step at the same time. If they do so, get back to the starting position and try it again.

IMAGINATION

- Find an interesting object. It could be anything (e.g., a coat hanger, a sheet of paper, a statuette, etc.).
- Make a circle in which everybody has enough space.
- Send this object around the circle. Everyone should show in a pantomimic way “what it is and how to use it”, but not to show the original purpose of this object. It is necessary to engage your imagination.

2. Preparation

Although you are a leader of the activity the Theatre of the Oppressed, it is better to hold the post of a **facilitator** and let the participants work in a more collaborative and consensual way so as to give preference to participative decision-making. However, if you see that the group is indecisive and it is difficult to reach a joint decision, you can choose a more top-down approach and a direct way of communication, and become a director instead of a facilitator

REQUIREMENTS

The best environment is a spacious room, which can be divided into an imaginary stage and an auditorium with seating. It is advisable to get rid of everything disturbing (for example, provide babysitting in advance or not let anyone who doesn't attend the workshop walk through the room).

TIME

The time allocation for this method is very variable.

It is possible to devote one day to the complete method, but if possible, and if the method raises important issues, it is advisable to devote several weeks to the whole method systematically.

MASK

It is possible to make a mask for the main character and also to give the main character a fictitious name.

The use of masks has a privileged position in drama therapy. Masks serve a variety of purposes, most often as a tool for distancing and making the characters anonymous.⁵

- Get a classic white paper carnival mask in advance. Within the program, participants can draw on it (e.g., with tempera paint) and style it into a character facing any kind of oppression. It is good to prepare the mask in advance so that the paint can dry out.



3. The Theatre of the Oppressed

- Assign the following task to a group. Make an agreement on the issue/problem which is present in your lives and that you want to tackle in the activity. Look for common points of your oppression (for example, who is its perpetrator, how you deal with it, what is most troublesome, etc.). Finding the common issue/problem is usually the hardest part of this method. It does not necessarily have to be a big problem, but something like "I can't say no".
- Choose one moment together which you consider essential in oppression. The group of volunteers will play the circumstances of this moment in a very short improvised performance. Everyone is assigned a particular role to play.
- Stop them after a few minutes. Let the participants decide which idea or points they consider as the most important from improvisation.

Based on them, come up together with a particular very short scene (story script).

- Rehearse the short scene with the group. **TIP:** divide people from your workshop into two small groups. These groups can replace one another in the short scene at a predetermined moment. The second group replaces the first one at that very moment and continues to play. This ensures that the short scene always has an audience.

The Theatre of the Oppressed begins with a short scene, which was rehearsed in the previous step. This short scene should contain demonstrations of social or political problems (the oppression the participants face). The problem and the conflict seem authentic to the group. The oppression is demonstrated in the story's main character and most of the participants can identify with her.

Play the short scene in the way you practised it so everyone at the workshop knows what is going on in it. The short scene serves as a demonstration of the problem and it is presented with the aim to solve it.

- Then start playing the short scene again from the beginning.
- The problem of discrimination in job interviews addressed through the Theatre of the Oppressed.

“Spect-actors” have the power to stop and change the short scene at any phase of the show. Through this activity, they explore, show, analyse and transform the reality in which they live, which is the punch line of the Theatre of the Oppressed.

- In case one of the spect-actors doesn't like a particular action of the main character, and has a better idea of how she should act, all the spect-actor has to do is say STOP and raise her hand. Current actresses^D of the short scene has to freeze in motion. The spect-actor who stopped the short scene replaces **the main character in her role**. The newcomer can choose from which moment she wants to participate in the story (for example, she can go back a bit or continue only from the moment she doesn't agree with). Then she continues with the short scene and in the role of the main character she acts and behaves at her own discretion.
- The play can be stopped by every spect-actors, which means by both groups: spectators and actors/actresses. If any of the actresses (who are currently standing on the stage) doesn't like the specific action of the main character, she says STOP and replaces another actress in the role of the main character. Her former role is replaced by someone else. But it doesn't happen very often.

WARNING: It is not allowed to use interventions which are unnatural, supernatural or like a 'magic' solution (for example, one million EUR has been added to the account, the husband has suddenly completely changed his personality, etc.).

- Other spect-actors who remain in the audience watch the alteration of the short scene. Then they vote on whether they agree or not with this particular change.
- While voting, they should take into consideration whether the intervention is appropriate and plausible and whether it would lead to new and better results for the situation. **TIP:** give everyone in the group a piece of red and green paper. Papers could be raised above heads – green means “yes”, and red means “no”. In this way, the opinion of the participants is easily identifiable. But of course, it is up to you to decide and prepare beforehand the voting system.
- If the result of the voting is YES, the storyline continues and reacts to the change. If the result is NO, any other spect-actor can intervene and try to apply her idea.

^D Of course, it is possible to try the Theatre of the Oppressed also with men – amateur actors. But in this project we work only with groups of multiple discriminated women. That is the reason why we use the term “actress”.



Photo: Tereza Sejková



Voting.
Photo: Tereza Sejkova

- In this way, the spect-actors gradually learn how to act correctly in problematic situations. In the best case, they find a solution to the problems they face.

OPTION 1: An actress who no longer wants to continue playing can leave the stage and, by touching one of the spectators, pass on the role. That person then replaces her on the stage.

OPTION 2: The spect-actors are not required to replace only the protagonist (the main character who is oppressed), but any character – even the antagonists (someone who causes oppression) – if they can “identify with their struggle”.

PROS AND CONS OF USING THIS METHOD

The method of the Theatre of the Oppressed has a lot of advantages. Based on our experience, techniques such as encouraging the use of body language, acting and painting are very useful and allow an engaging learning process with a lot of fun. Also, it is not necessary to use the method completely. Of course, using the complete method of the Theatre of the Oppressed has a bigger impact. But, there is a possibility to implement just a few activities from the whole method (for example, some icebreakers or warm-up activities). Thanks to this method, it is possible to open a hard topic with vulnerable groups in an informal environment. Also, one of the biggest pros is that the group of participants can implement their ideas on how to improve their lives in a controlled and simulated environment because the Theatre of the Oppressed stimulates critical observation and representation of reality, envisioning the production of consciousness and particular actions. Good ideas and solutions do not come from the social worker, like telling what to do, but from the target group itself.

The con of this activity is that it is exacting to apply the whole method to direct work with a group of vulnerable women. It is needed to learn the techniques in a way that would allow leaders to grasp how to approach and implement the technique from the point of view of an educator, not a mere participant. It is possible to take a lesson on the Theatre of the Oppressed.

We are on the same boat

“Once you figure out what respect tastes like,
it tastes better than attention.”
– P!nk, musical artist

WHY IS THIS METHOD WORTH TRYING?

With this method we can open topics about gender based violence in a bigger group. We use the method with different target groups from students to social workers, counsellors, etc., as a part of prevention activities. It can be used as an introduction to the topic of violence in relationships. The first activity with “toilet paper” can be used as an icebreaker, a safe space maker and, at the same time, as an introduction to the topic.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

Their goal is to share the inequality experience of every participant and create safe space for discussion on not easy topics.

Toilet paper

- Each participant is supposed to take some pieces of toilet paper without knowing what the next step will be. Then, each person is asked to describe to the rest of the group situations in which they experienced inequalities, and the number of incidents depends on the number of pieces of toilet paper they took in the first round.
- Thanks to the activity we were able to realise how much inequality acts we are still facing in our lives. The follow-up discussion is an opportunity to compare generations and geographical differences among the participants.
- **Requirements:** one roll of toilet paper.

PREVENTION ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH

There is one general goal for all the activities of the methodological handbook which is to realise what characteristics are usually expected from male and female and all the possible genders and what the consequences of these general expectations are in everyday life. The handbook itself

contains 26 activities with 18 worksheets and 8 exercises without worksheets designed for informal educational purposes.

Redistribution of gender advantages

- The participants are divided into two groups and each group is asked to write down five typical female and male characteristics.
- During the discussion, it is important to focus on the advantages and disadvantages which came out from the fact of so-called typical male and female characteristics. The role of the facilitator is to stress the fact that most of the typical male characteristics are more beneficiary ones as it is with females once.
- **Requirements:** white sheets of paper, markers.

Alien

- The facilitator makes a drawing of a person and they explain the following situation: the planet Earth is visited by an alien, and we – the participants – are asked to describe human beings with their characteristics and typical activities.
- The main topics of the follow-up discussion are gender neutrality and why a male is always representative of human beings in textbooks.
- **Requirements:** flipchart, markers.

SENSIBILIZATION OF PROFESSIONALS ON THE TOPIC OF VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

The main goal is to sensibilise participants by busting the myths about gender-based violence in intimate relationships.

“A 2013 UN homicide survey found that 96 % of homicide perpetrators worldwide are male. So is it humans who are murderous, or men?”
– Caroline Criado Perez, *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*

Facts and myths of violence in intimate relationships

- The participants are divided into two groups and each group gets a number of both: myths and factual statements. The facilitator creates a table of Myths and Facts on the flip chart, and the participants are supposed to recognise which statement is a myth and which is a fact, and then stick them in the relevant field on the table. It's important

to be sensitive as a facilitator and be prepared to smooth the way for a discussion afterwards.

- **Requirements:** a flip chart, markers, printed table of Myths and Facts (see below).

TABLE FOR: FACTS AND MYTHS ACTIVITY	
MYTHS	FACTS
A woman experiencing violence has certain typical characteristics.	Women and girls from all social groups experience violence, regardless of their family status, education, age or profession as well as their ethnicity or religious affiliation.
The perpetrator is usually a psychopath.	The perpetrators are usually "normal" men.
The man perpetuating violence himself experienced violence during childhood, is enraged, is an alcoholic, etc.	Experiencing violence during childhood can lead to violent behaviour, but can also lead to an absolute rejection. Alcohol removes inhibitions and strengthens aggressive impulses but it is not the root cause of violence. Violent behaviour is typically selective – a man who is violent to his partner will not typically assault his boss at work.
Women are, at least partially, to blame for the violence – they act or dress suggestively, they choose violent partners, they provoke inappropriate criticism, etc.	There is no excuse for violence. Under no circumstances can the perpetrator be absolved of their responsibility and the blame placed on their victims. The aggressor can always choose not to act violently.
Thanks to increasing emancipation, women have reached the same status as men.	Only a select number of countries have reached effective and sustainable change in global comparisons. Gender inequality remains even in societies with strong emancipatory awareness (such as lower pay for the same work, lower career advancement opportunities and double responsibility between work and domestic life)
A woman provokes sexual acts through revealing clothing or suggestive behaviour. This is a reason for excusing sexualised violence.	There are no excuses for sexualised violence.
Sexual harassment (at the workplace or at school) is rude.	Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on sex or gender, and as such, it is legally prohibited by the so-called anti-discrimination law.
The motive behind the sexual assault is sexual gratification, it is a crime of passion.	Sexual assault is about power, not sex. The main motives behind sexual assault are the need to control, strong manship, and aggression. It is a violent act in which sex is used as a weapon. The cause of sexualised violence is, among other things, the stereotypical ideas of men as sexual predators and of women as objects of conquest that should not openly communicate matters of their sexuality.
Rape and sexual assault are the results of uncontrollable urges. The perpetrators are usually deviants.	The vast majority of cases of sexual assault are premeditated, even if a specific victim is not targeted. The perpetrators of sexual assault are usually considered 'normal' by their peers.

Sexuality is a fundamental part of marriage, and spouses are obliged to fulfil their partner's sexual desires.	No form of cohabitation obliges someone to submit to forced sexual intercourse or unwanted sexual practices.
Sexual assault is usually perpetrated by strangers at night in the park.	The vast majority of sexual assault victims know their assailants, but the majority of reported sexual assaults are done by unknown assailants and occur in public spaces. This points to the fact that most sexual assault cases are unreported because the victim knows the perpetrator.
Men are led to violence by their personal circumstances (such as drug addiction or alcoholism) or their current specific situation (such as unemployment).	Men use violence to establish control and reinforce their dominant position. Personal circumstances or specific situations can trigger violence but are not its root cause.
The use of violence is characteristic of certain demographics – for people living in social exclusion, for certain ethnicities, or for religious groups.	Women and girls from all social groups experience violence.
Psychological violence is the subjective feeling of overly-sensitive people.	Cases of psychological violence are real and can often be documented (records of threats and intimidation, witness testimony). Its intensity and impact can be measured through its real impact on the medical condition of the victim.
Stalking is a rare phenomenon. The stalker is an unknown stranger.	Stalking is a very common phenomenon. There is usually a close relationship between the stalker and the victim.
Forced marriage is exclusive to certain socio-cultural factors (religion, tradition, financial benefit, residency legalisation).	Forced marriage occurs in all countries around the world regardless of religion, social or cultural origins, or ethnicity, nationality, etc.

Back writing activity.
Photo: Tereza Sejková





Final result of the Half Portraits activity.
Photo: Tereza Sejková

“Never before have I thought of the fact how deep our gender stereotypes are rooted in our society.”

– A participant from the We Are on the Same Boat pilot testing activity

SUPPORT GROUPS BETWEEN FORMER AND CURRENT CLIENTS

The main goal is to make a safe space for sharing and supporting among all the participants. We found that it is very important for our current clients to have an opportunity to meet with someone who's had a similar crisis situation as our former client. They can share and support each other and it could be very beneficial for both sides. All of these activities are supposed to be voluntary. They include tasks with art-therapeutic elements.

Half portraits

- The facilitator takes portrait photos of the participants and then prints them in black and white on thin paper. Participants then cut out their faces from the photo and cut it in half.
- Participants are divided in groups of 2.
- Afterwards, each pair draws the other (missing) half of the face of their team partner.
- The main goal is not to draw the best portrait but to say something nice to each other and what they appreciate about their partners during the drawing. The activity can make a stronger bond between participants, and they should feel more relaxed and safe.
- **Requirements:** mobile phone with a camera, printer, markers, glue, white paper and a pair of scissors.

Back writing

- Every participant receives a marker and gets a white sheet of paper taped to their back. The task is to write supportive messages to each other, or something for which they are thankful to the other person. They can read it at the end of the support group, or later when they are alone.
- We recommend doing this activity at the end of the session so that the participants can finish the tough session with a better feeling.
- **Requirements:** a sheet of white paper (A4), markers, Scotch tape.

Walk and Talk – Career Counselling on the Move

WHY IS THIS METHOD WORTH TRYING?

During career counselling, you do not have to sit. The innovative method of consulting whilst walking, first used by Peregrina in 2016 and constantly developed by this organisation working with migrants, offers many advantages for both, clients and counsellors.

CONTEXT OF THE METHOD

“Walking and talking and thinking” has a long tradition in philosophy and literature. Aristotle philosophised with his students whilst walking, Sigmund Freud went for a walk every day to reflect on his work, in Virginia Woolf’s novels walking plays an important role, and Friedrich Nietzsche said: “Do not trust a thought that you have while sitting”.¹ Nevertheless, there is still no larger socio-scientific work on this method. The topic has

Practising the Walk and Talk method in the park
Photo: Tereza Sejková



been researched in smaller studies in the USA and Canada, primarily in the therapeutic context.² In German-speaking countries, two master’s theses dealt with the theory and practice of walking and talking.³ Also, Peregrina has developed an action guideline for career counselling whilst walking.⁴

TYPES

There are two types of career counselling sessions in motion:

1. Arranged consulting sessions embedded into an ongoing counselling process while walking outdoors (park, forest, etc.).
2. Spontaneous so-called “consultations between door and door”: low-threshold counselling situations (on the way to the bus, in the hallway, etc.).⁵

In the present project, the focus lies on the first type.

PROS AND CONS OF USING THIS METHOD

This method has many advantages for counselling with disadvantaged people like low-threshold access, a participative approach and improvement of the quality of life. An arranged outdoor consultation is, for example, ideally suited to activate resources, make decisions, overcome mental blockages, open up new perspectives and break down hierarchies in the counselling relationship. Not only is communication different when you walk compared to sitting, but also perception, feelings and impacts. For example, many clients find it pleasant that there is no eye contact when walking or that strong feelings can be processed better than when sitting.⁶ Experiencing nature also promotes human well-being on three levels: body, psyche and society. It contributes not only to the prevention and treatment of stress and depression but also to the willingness to move more and also has a socially integrative function, especially for marginalised groups of people.⁷

Of course, this method also has disadvantages, for example, problems with privacy protection, difficulties with writing the documentation from or during the session, or clients’ fear of a lack of efficiency.⁸ Also the Walk and Talk method cannot be used in any case as certain requirements need to be met.

*“There are no paths. Paths are created when you walk.”
– Antonio Machado Y Ruiz*

FOR WHOM IS THIS METHOD SUITABLE?

This method is suitable for all people who like to go for a walk as well as those who do not like to attend institutional counselling. Counselling on the move can also be carried out with people with physical limitations or disabilities, but then it must be adapted to their specific needs, for example with shorter walks or sit breaks.

Walk and Talk is, for example, recommended for the following counselling topics: biography reappraisal, reflection on life situations, developing new ideas, decision-making, overcoming fears and talking about grief.

APPLICATION OF WALK AND TALK - STEP BY STEP:

Preconditions:

- *The weather forecast must be checked*

Either wet and cold or very hot weather can be unpleasant for clients.

- *The route must be tested*

Of particular importance for coaching while walking is the appropriate environment, for example quiet, less frequented alleys, paths along rivers or canals, or parks with relaxing areas are recommended. Street noise, many people, construction sites, car traffic or distraction by stores are causing an unwanted disturbance in coaching while walking and should therefore be avoided.

- *The time should not be planned too tight*

Although, as in an indoor setting, there should be a time agreement between the consultant and the client, unforeseen events such as different walking tempos or rain can change this. Therefore, to avoid stress, a time buffer should be planned.

- *A backpack should be prepared*
The counsellor's backpack should include the following:
 - Clipboard with paper;
 - Pens/pencils;
 - Rain cover;
 - First aid bag;
 - Charged cell phone;
 - Water bottle/cups;
 - Depending on the area and season: sun and insect protection, warming pads
 - Optional: cardboard cards, clothesline and clothespins, laptop, blanket, etc.
- *Safety issues should be clarified*

On the one hand, the safety of the consultants must be ensured when they are outdoors, i.e. it is necessary to exclude the possibility of clients crossing boundaries, e.g. sexual or violent assaults. On the other hand, the safety of the clients must be guaranteed, i.e. dangerous situations must be avoided. Furthermore, it has to be examined which legal safeguards are necessary for counselling while walking.⁹

FIRST CONSULTATION

- It is advisable to hold the first meeting in the consultation room. The documentation is less complicated and the professionalism of the process as well as the understanding of the roles of counsellor and client are easier to convey. Also, the clients can decide more freely whether they are really interested in this walk and talk and want to step out.
- The method should be offered to the clients in an individual way. Examples could be:
“If you want, we can do the consultation today during a walk. Then, we may come up with new ideas, and movement is also healthy!”
“We have developed a new consulting method with which we have had a really good experience. It is called coaching while walking. Are you also interested in trying it out with me?”
- If the client has decided to have a conversation outside and the basic conditions such as meeting place, time arrangement, and equipment have been clarified, you're ready to go!

THE SESSION OUTSIDE

- The consulting situation outside is very informal and therefore it should be defined exactly when the session actually begins, e.g.: at the beginning of a forest path or at a specific time.
- During the Walk and Talk method.
- Photo: Tereza Sejkova
- The consultants must know the route well as they should concentrate on the conversation and not on orientation during coaching. Also, the counsellors have to look at the time. The clients do not have to think about these issues. It is the task of the consultants to adapt to the pace of the clients. Walking should not be the focus but the conversation. Thus, counsellors must take into account the physical conditions of their clients.
- The counsellors can use their usual conversation techniques. Overhearing the conversation by strangers should be avoided as far as possible. For very sensitive topics, a protected setting, e.g., a counselling room is recommended. Unpredictable events (e.g. an approaching dog or a blocked path) should be dealt with appropriately to the acute consulting situation, i.e. the matter can be ignored or included in the conversation. It is always important that the clients feel comfortable.
- Walk and Talk can be combined with various other methods – working with metaphors is particularly suitable. In nature, there are many metaphors that could be used for counselling: crossroads, a river, the sky, or a bird. When appropriate, work with posters or cards which can be hung on a tree or laid out on the lawn. Elements of movement therapy, for example, could also be incorporated into the setting.
- Documentation is normally done afterwards. Sometimes it is possible to take notes during a break in the session. Sound recordings are often felt to be uncomfortable by the clients. Methods from qualitative social research can also be used for documentation which has to be made outside. After each session, the counsellor and the client agree together whether the next one takes place outdoors again or indoors.

EVALUATION

- According to Peregrina's counsellors, outdoor consulting is successful when 1) a trusting relationship has been established, 2) quick, un-bureaucratic help for self-help has been provided, and 3) client's life has changed a little bit for the better already.¹⁰
- When using a new method, it is very important to constantly evaluate whether it is a good fit for the clients and also for yourself as

a counsellor. Peregrina has received very positive feedback from their clients, some examples are:

"Movement is good for talking"

"It was pleasant that we didn't always have to look into each other's eyes"

"Walking can release a blockage"

"You can go different ways"

"Walking outside releases thoughts and fantasies, opens you up to the future"

Photo: Tereza Sejkova





Career Counselling While Baking Bread

The 3S Career Guidance method

“Imagine the smell of homemade bread!”
– Jamie Oliver

WHY IS THIS METHOD WORTH TRYING?

One might be surprised at first sight how baking bread could be helpful in the process of career counselling. Consulting is, or at least should be, a creative process and so is bread baking. It **inspires brainstorming** about alternative, **more creative and social career paths** through the **stages of its production process**.

The so-called “3S Career Guidance Method” from Nadezhda Savova refers to the following stages: **Sifting, Shaping and Sharing** represent the different phases of a creative process: **dreaming, critical analysis and overcoming obstacles**. Sharing of the baked bread also creates a unique sense of support and community. Bread baking is a basic and universal technique of mankind and inspires the confidence that there are creative solutions to any problem.¹

CONTEXT OF THE METHOD

In 2008, anthropologist Nadezhda Savova (in her capacity as a UNESCO consultant) founded the International Council for Cultural Centres (I3C). This is a global network with the goal of uniting community-based non-profit centres for arts and traditions around the world. As part of this association, the so-called Bread Houses Network was subsequently formed which now includes initiatives on all continents (see the figures below). In 2009, Nadezhda Savova also developed a so-called Bread House in her old family home in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, which is at the same time an innovative social enterprise, cultural centre and community bakery (see figure). It became clear that bread baking is not only essential for nutrition and culture but it can also be useful for social and educational work.



The result of career counselling while baking bread.
Photo: Tereza Sejková

If counsellors, educators or social workers are interested in all different kinds of methods related to bread baking it is very beneficial that on the Bread Houses Network's website, numerous experiences from different contexts and countries are collected and described. The 3S Career Guidance Method is only one of them. Anyone who works with bread baking in a social context can become part of this global network.

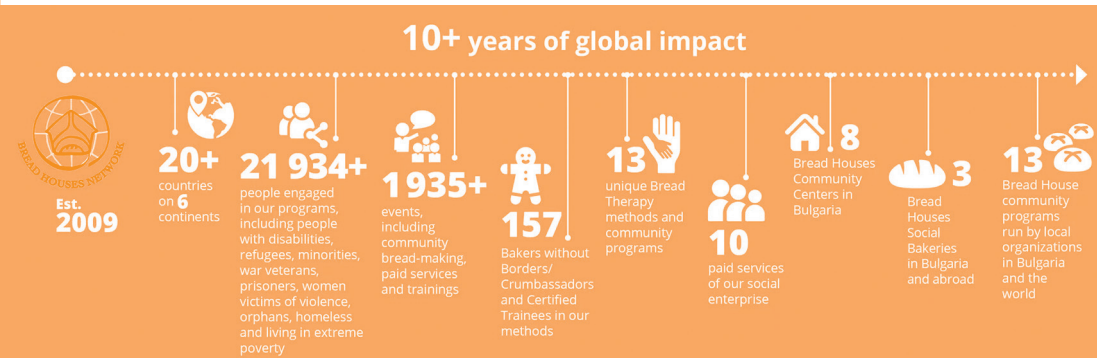
"Make Bread, not War!"
- Nadezhda Savova

Peregrina's educational guidance team learned about the 3S Career Guidance Method back in 2013 at a workshop held by Nadezhda Savova at the Austrian Euroguidance Conference in Vienna.³ The benefit of this method for working with migrant women was already recognized at that time but there was no opportunity to try it with this target group and adapt it to them before the present project.

Bread baking is not only a very popular topic among the target group of migrant women, about which there is a lot of exchange of ideas and experiences in German courses or on social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups, but it has also become very popular in many communities due to the DIY trends of the last few years, which were intensified by the Coronavirus crisis. "It's only in the last 20 years that the trend of baking your own bread developed. Through Corona, it went from a niche hobby to a mass phenomenon."⁴

In Austria, there are several enterprises that offer bread-baking workshops. These also refer to the positive effects of baking bread together on team building or women's empowerment, but the competence to learn bread baking is in the foreground and not so much the social benefits of that process.⁵ There are also some cooking projects by migrants and Austrians, but they rather focus on cultural exchange and breaking down prejudices, not on questions of educational and vocational guidance, and also bread does not play a central role.⁶

Illustration of International Council for Cultural Centers (I3C).²



DIFFERENT TYPES OF BREAD BAKING METHODS

*“Baking bread can help us at a number of different levels.”
– Pauline Beaumont, psychological therapist*

The Bread Houses Network developed a wide variety of methods for using bread baking in a social or educational context from which the 3S Career Guidance described here is just one out of many⁷:

- Bread Therapy
- Theatre of Crumbs
- Bakers without Borders
- Bread-Building Team Building
- Ovens for Peace
- Mobile Bread House
- Kitchen Music
- Breads of the World
- Sacred Breads
- Eco Pedagogy
- 3S Career Guidance

PROS AND CONS OF USING THIS METHOD

A low-threshold access, a participative approach and quality of life improvement through raising awareness of healthy nutrition are just some of the advantages of the bread method for working with disadvantaged women. The Bread House Network home page lists some reasons why working with bread is so beneficial.

- Bread is universally present and loved around the world.
- When people cook together and share food, they are very much likely to establish peace and cooperation.
- Creating bread inspires the confidence that there are creative solutions to any problem.
- Tactile and taste experiences (bread-making stimulates all five senses!).
- It is an entertaining and encouraging cooking activity.
- Making bread yourself is very environmentally friendly and even became trendy.

A study by Japanese researchers in 2013 showed that the level of stress hormone cortisol in blood decreases when you touch something soft and

warm – like dough. According to the Austrian Nutritional Psychologist Dürschmid, it is also well documented that “baking aromas have a *considerable psychological effect – they make us feel secure, homely and cared for*”.⁸

Of course, this method has also disadvantages, for example, it needs a relatively large amount of time, only a few topics of career counselling are suitable for it, the risk of going off-topic is greater than with usual methods and there are difficulties with writing the documentation. Also, it cannot be used in any place, certain requirements need to be met.

FOR WHOM AND WHAT IS THIS METHOD SUITABLE?

Bread-baking can be done by anyone, from children to elderly people, the educationally disadvantaged to the academically educated, people with and without cooking experience, and also those with mental or physical limitations or disabilities. It is possible to use the method in individual as well as in group settings.

The 3 S Method is best suitable for career orientation and developing new ideas but it is also recommended for the following counselling topics: biography reappraisal, reflection on life situation, discussing problems at the workplace and much more. Likewise, it can be used very well for team building or in the inter – and supervision of consultants.

APPLICATION OF CAREER COUNSELLING WHILE BAKING BREAD - STEP BY STEP:

Requirements

- Room with a large clean table;
- Time should not be planned too tight;
- Aprons and tea towels;
- Oven and baking tray;
- The bread recipe that has been tried before;
- Ingredients for baking bread;
- Other utensils, e.g. job cards.

“Cooking can be good for the soul and making bread is such a rewarding, therapeutic, tactile thing – you’ll be so proud of yourself when you’ve cracked it. From one simple bread recipe like this, there are a million things you can do – big ones, small ones, in a tin, on a tray, get creative. There are also loads of lovely flours you can experiment with – whole wheat, rye, spelt, using a blend of a couple of different ones. Plus, making bread is a great thing to do with the kids – they’ll love it.”

– Jamie Oliver

RECIPE FOR EASY HOMEMADE BREAD⁹

Ingredients for bread for one person

- 1/2 sachet of dried yeast (3,5g);
- 1/2 kg strong bread flour, plus extra for dusting;
- 320 ml water;
- Salt;
- Optional: olives, cheese, pesto, nuts, seeds, herbs, etc.

Process

1. Pour some of the water into a cup and mix it with the yeast.
2. Pour most of the flour onto the clean table, mix it with the salt, the yeast and little by little with the water.
3. Bring it together as a ball of dough, adding more flour as you need to stop your hands and the dough from sticking.
4. Transfer the dough to a flour-dusted surface and keep moving, kneading, pushing and stretching it for 5 minutes, or until you have a silky and elastic dough.
5. Use your floured hands to shape the dough into a rough ball, put it in a bowl, flour the top and cover it with a clean, damp tea towel. Allow it to prove for about 30 minutes– ideally in a warm, draught-free place.
6. Once the dough has proven, knock the air out by punching it with your fist, then kneading for 30 seconds.

7. You can now shape it or flavour it as required – folded, filled, tray baked, whatever – and leave it to prove once again from about 30 minutes to until an hour, or till it has doubled in size once more.
8. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
9. Carefully transfer your bread dough to the oven and gently close the door. Bake for about 35 minutes, or until golden. You can tell if it’s cooked by tapping its bottom – if it sounds hollow it’s done; if it doesn’t then pop it back in for a little longer.
10. Once cooked, place your loaf on a cooling rack and let it cool.

“What is the point of all the knowledge of human beings if they do not know where their bread comes from?”

– Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

ROLES OF COUNSELLORS AND CLIENTS

The consulting is very informal therefore roles should be defined exactly when the set begins. The clients are “the bakers”. They take over the practical part of the bread process. The consultants are the assistants, they prepare the ingredients, warm the oven, watch the time, etc. so that the clients are relaxed and concentrate on talking and making bread. Counsellors also need to feel competent and confident during the bread-baking process. They can use their usual conversation techniques. It is important that the bread is a success. It is always important that the clients feel comfortable. Consultants need to remember and write notes about what the client is saying.

Modifications

The method is still under development. Each application may lead to new ideas for implementation and modifications. Peregrina has had a very good experience with the combination of the MAIZ occupational cards.¹⁰ Through this, career ideas that were thought of in the counselling process could be further concretised. In addition, this makes very good use of the waiting time when the bread is in the oven.

3 Stages – 3 Questions

“The process of going back to primal principles, of working with basic ingredients provides us with an opportunity to learn and to be creative in ways that can have a lasting positive impact on your well-being.”
– Pauline Beaumont

At each one of the three main stages of bread making – sifting, shaping, and sharing – the clients take on different roles – that of the dreamer, critique, and finally realist. Nadezhda Savova refers to Walt Disney’s creative teams for these roles.¹¹ Peregrina consultants have found that it is very helpful to prepare questions for each phase. The whole process takes at least two hours.

Stage 1: Sifting – dreaming

- The flour is poured on the table by the clients. They can draw with it, play with it.
- Little by little the water and the yeast are added and mixed with the flour. Olives, cheese, pesto, nuts, seeds, herbs, etc. can be added and described symbolically.
- The situation should be relaxed. The clients should be imaginative and open-minded. Nadezhda Savova calls this kind of brainstorming “idea-sifting”.
- The counsellors encourage the clients to be open to everything, not to set limits for themselves and help to bake bread where the clients want it and try to remember or write notes on the dreams of the clients.
- Possible question: what are your dreams regarding your professional development? Don’t think too modestly!

“Baker man is baking bread
You’ve got to cool down, take it easy
You’ve got to cool down, relax, take it easy
Slow down (slow down), relax (relax)”
– Laid Back

Stage 2: Shaping – critical reflection

- After the participants have started mixing the flour and the water, things literally get “sticky” while the ideas are also getting more and more critiqued as people enter the role of the critic. This critical phase

reflects the problems of the career orientation process, the pragmatic limits of personal opportunities become apparent.

- When kneading and shaping, things get serious and crucial. The bakers may ask themselves: does the dough fit? What can I do better? When the dough is ready, decisions should be made.

“Dough kneading is probably the most common source of error and challenge for ‘bread baking beginners’.”
– food blogger Alexandra

- Possible question: if you think critically about your dreams now, what comes to your mind? What could be difficult?
- When the dough is resting, the consultants can give feedback to the clients, they can talk about what happened. The most important findings are summarised together and the consultants write them down on flip charts or notepads.
- After resting, before the dough comes into the oven, symbols can be drawn on it, if the clients want to do so. This image/symbol could become the logo of one’s future enterprise, initiative, or key hobby.

Stage 3: Sharing – realistic and supporting further plans

- After the clients have transferred their bread dough to the oven, the talking process between the counsellor and the client continues. Peregrina uses occupational cards, developed by an Austrian migrant women organisation called MAIZ.¹² The consultants ask the clients to choose from about 60 picture cards, showing various professions, about 3 cards that fit their career wishes. Through this, career ideas that were thought of during the baking process could be further concretised.
- It is a great moment when the bread is baked and comes out of the oven. It should be tasted and shared together. Clients feel encouraged because they have successfully made a product. In addition, the sharing of bread creates an atmosphere of mutual support and strengthening.
- Possible questions: how could you overcome the problems that have arisen while baking bread? What and who could help you in future?
- The result of career counselling while baking bread.

“The sharing of the baked bread (...) creates a unique sense of comfort, support, and community, thus, truly giving people the needed self-esteem and confidence that an alternative path is possible”
– Nadezhda Savova

Documentation and Evaluation

Documentation is normally done afterwards. Methods from ethnographic fieldwork can also be used for documentation which has to be made in informal settings.¹³

When using a new method, it is very important to constantly evaluate whether it is a good fit for the clients and also for yourself as a counsellor. There is very positive feedback in experience reports:

“I love kneading! It gives me confidence that things are in my hands. And I am perfectly distracted from the fact that I find myself in a counselling situation which would make me feel a bit inhibited and uncomfortable.”
– participant of Peregrina training

“I would never have thought that this method could reveal forgotten career desires of mine and that it would also encourage me to realise them.”
– participant of training held by Nadezhda Savova

“Out of nearly nothing, just water and flour, which normally would just run through my fingers, I could create a big thing: real bread! What a great metaphor for bringing one’s dreams into something real.”
– participant of Peregrina training



Photo: Sigrid Awart

Jump Over The Walls (JOW) – Biographic-Historical Methods

WHY IS THIS METHOD WORTH TRYING?

It is a very useful method to improve one's own ability to listen to and to get to know each other better. Thanks to this method, it is possible to gain new perspectives and deepen consciousness. It also supports the appreciation of diversity by discovering intercultural differences and similarities and reflects the interconnections between history (or broader social and cultural processes) and individual biography.

CONTEXT OF THE METHOD:

For the last 15 years eFKa has conducted biographic-historical workshops called Jump Over the Walls (JOW). The core of each JOW workshop is the biographic-historical methods. They combine biographic educational methods and the instruments of oral history.

The concept of the JOW – biographic-historical workshop is an educational concept of how to give space for biographical stories which will be able to highlight the special historical period or events from the point of view of women living in that period and to understand their role/place in the historical process of that time. At the same time, the participants have a chance to learn through self-reflection and from others as well they can experience recognition as witnesses of their story.

The oral history methods were elaborated to get to know and document the life and culture of people who do not have their written history – either in the case of peasants¹, the victims of totalitarianism² or women³. Oral history is a method to give a voice and a space for disadvantaged people.

Oral history methods combined with biographical methods allow access to women and their experiences and to overcome their marginalisation. At the same time, it can be a very effective method of learning history. Real contact with real persons as a source of knowledge about the past has

a huge educational impact. The interviewer gains information, reflects on their stereotypical views and can change their attitude.

The workshops can be tailored to different groups and situations, e.g.: learning about the most recent history/herstory^E of Europe, learning about one's story of women's movements in different countries of Europe and the world, learning about the 100th anniversary of women's voting rights in different countries in Europe, learning in Polish, English or German, for one or multinational groups.

In each case, they make elderly people visible and show how they are necessary for society. The JOW workshops support intergenerational communication, integration and contribute to empowering seniors and their feeling of being respected.

This whole JOW method consists of several sub-methods and activities which are described below.

“Each meeting was different. The most surprising thing was openness. Sometimes those old, weak, old women were talking openly about such issues which were not taught either in my home, in the media or at the universities. Only sometimes one can read about it in novels. But books are not the same, they do not have the same expression, they do not have trembling hands.”

– Agnieszka, participant of eFKa's intergenerational projects

ORAL HISTORY (OH)

- Learning history from reading books is something else than learning history from people who are witnesses of past events. In many cases, books are biased or just incapable of providing the reader with a representative and comprehensive image of the past. It is so in the case of women, there is too little information about women from the past. Even contemporary history is full of question marks.
- The oral history method enables one to give another access to history, then the historical reading books. At the same time, it empowers disadvantaged groups (in this case elderly women) by making them heard and visible.
- OH requires a particularly careful attitude to the witnesses of history. They are not only information carriers but also living persons with their emotions, possible traumas, dignity, different expectations, and

^E The term “herstory” signifies history viewed from a female or specifically feminist perspective.



Ms Kazimiera Ławrynowicz and Ms, Anna Długosz, survivors of the ethnical cleansing in the Stalin times (former eastern Poland, western Ukraine now, Winter 1940) and gulag, forced to displace after WWII (former eastern Germany, western Poland now). Participants of the OH project "Jugów. Memory and Oblivion".
 Photo: Archive of eFka

primarily, with their need to be respected. It is why OH developed the method of narrative interview which has two aspects: on the one hand, it allows one to gain knowledge about past events, and on the other hand, it helps to overcome the marginalisation of individuals and of all groups.

BIOGRAPHICAL METHOD

- Biography-oriented approaches are powerful integrative and experience-based pedagogical tools for reaching and integrating socially marginalised persons or groups into society. It is particularly useful in adult education. Everyone has their own personal life story and everyone is an expert in their biography. Also, almost everybody is interested in learning about the biographical stories of others.
- Applying biographical approaches in settings of adult education allows learners to reflect on their own and others' life experiences and personal stances, for example: on different population groups or cultures, their past and history, learning or personal values.
- Biographical learning and learning from biographies furthermore offer the opportunity to build bridges between different cultures, generations or population groups.

PHASES OF THE WORKSHOP:

Phase 1: Getting to know each other, creating a friendly and trustful space and involving the participants in the topic of the workshop

Activities included in this phase:

1. Introducing yourself, the presentation goes round and has the same format, e.g. "My name is ... and when my country joined the EU / when the wall in Berlin fell/was built, I was ..." or "My name is ... and it comes from ...".
2. Specially tailored socio-metrical units – warm-up activities in which the participants move around, communicate and organise themselves in a particular order e.g. form the tallest to the shortest person, eldest to youngest, who live the furthest – the closest from the place where the workshop is held, etc.).
3. **History of my Name**, described below.

Application of the activity History of my Name:

- The exercise is done by the whole group in a circle. Each participant, one after another, tells her/his name and tells what the history connected to naming them that way was.
- **Objectives:** After each presentation conductor may ask follow-up questions which support reflecting on the social and historical meaning of the name and its individual way to use/carry it, e.g.:
 - Do you like your name?
 - Did you want to change it?
 - Do you want us to name you ... /What version of your name do you want to use here?
- The reflection lets the participants experience directly a broader understanding of history, not limited to the history of famous people or to the history of political events. This exercise shows the closest interconnections between the individual biography and the history of bigger social groups, both in a narrow sense (parents, family) and in a broader (generations, nations, etc.).
- The exercise allows all participants, in a soft and attractive way, to get to know each other. It helps to create a safe and trustful atmosphere.
- **Requirements:** a room big enough for a circle made of chairs.

- **For whom is this activity suitable?** For a group of participants of different nationalities, ages, sexual orientations, etc. This exercise works better in a very differentiated group.

Phase 2: Gaining personal access to the main topic of the workshop which is a historical process (e.g. socialism, war, transition, broadening of the European Union, etc.)

Activities included in this phase:

1. **Narrative Triangle** – learning to hear each other – how to talk to and listen to each other, what supports it, what disturbs.
2. Memory exercises (e.g. “Tell me about the street of your childhood”, “Tell me about your grandmother, tell me about the room/flat/house of your childhood, your first trip abroad”, etc.).
3. Biography as history (e.g. ask “Where were you when it (a particular event) happened?”, use the activity **My Food Biography** described below).

Application of the activity Narrative Triangle:

- The participants are asked to form groups of three people to exchange their stories and reflect on their competence in telling and listening. There are three positions that change in turns:
 - **Participant A** tells his or her story for 5 minutes;
 - **Participant B** listens carefully and actively without any interruption or comment supporting A in a non-verbal way. If A finished too early, B supports A with remarks which are connected to the last sentences A said. B can ask A some additional questions as soon as A has definitely finished their 5-minute story.

Important: No comments or appraisals should be made! B must not tell his/her own stories, interrupt or change the topics of A.
 - **Participant C:** listens carefully and ensures the observance of the rules and time.
- There are 10 minutes available for each person (storytelling and questions). After ten minutes, roles are changed. Every person bears the responsibility for what they want to tell.
- Everything can be, but nothing must be told. The narrations remain in the group and will be kept confidential.

- When everybody has a chance to tell his or her story, another 20 to 30 minutes are available to reflect on the different experiences and discuss some questions, for example:
 - What do you like best: listening, talking or observing? Why?
 - What helps in talking/listening?
 - What is disturbing?
 - What did you expect from the others?
 - What makes your talking/hearing easier for you?
- This exercise teaches the meaning of telling a personal, biographical story and listening to it actively. Three people take part and each of the participants plays at first the role of a person who tells a story, then, a person who listens to and a person who observes. The person who plays the role of the “interviewee”, tells a biographical story to the “interviewer”. The “observer” follows the interview. All three roles are exercised by each of the three participants of the exercise. In the plenary round, they answer the questions about how they felt in each of the roles, why, what was supportive and disturbing during the interview.
- To get a good interview, one has to be a good listener. Asking questions always limits the interviewee which is why it is better to avoid questions. If the interviewee doesn’t have an idea what to tell next, it is enough to paraphrase her/his last sentence while asking for a more detailed story. One can also ask about the following events. Our questions should be open not to influence the interviewee.
- This exercise lets you experience the situation of being inside of the relation of the interview. It can be used in many situations since it teaches how to get in touch with people over the differences of class, nation, age, etc.
- **For whom is this activity suitable?** For an intergenerational group. Both young and older participants are needed because rhetorical traditions are changing through generations. On the other hand, in the case of participants struggling with verbal expression (e.g. migrants, disabled persons), it can be helpful as well, but other activities might work better.
- **Requirements:** A big room or more rooms can be used, so the groups don’t interfere with each other. The venue has to be big enough, to be able to form a circle for the plenary part of that unit.
- **Recommendation:** The method usually opens and activates the participants. The educator has to be gentle in keeping time.

Application of activity My Food Biography:

- Participants draw a line on a paper that represents their life from birth to now. On this line, they mark important dates from childhood until today (such as birth, the beginning of school, first job, etc.).
- Working individually on the following questions, they write and/or draw under and above the line:
 - What was I eating when I was a child, teenager or adult?
 - Which meals had a significant impact on me in my childhood?
 - What were my typical everyday dishes and what did I eat during celebrations?
 - Which habits, rituals and norms existed in my family in connection with eating/meals?
 - Which ones still play an important role for me? Which ones have changed?
 - What are the changes in the food I liked/disliked?
 - What are the changes in my way of eating?
 - To what extent is my way of eating directed by me/by others?
 - Did I cook by myself or did somebody cook for me?
 - To what extent are my meals directed by me/by others?
- **Time:** 5–10 minutes for introduction and explaining the exercise, 20 minutes for individual work on the given questions.
- According to the number of participants, different ways of presenting the results are possible. The participants can present their papers to each other first in groups of three and then give a summary of their discussions to the plenum. Or they present their individual work to all the others, for example by arranging a “gallery” of their posters on the walls.
- Aims of the activity is a reflection on our individual habits and ways of eating and on the circumstances or events which influenced them. Also, understanding our “food biography”, getting new perspectives and deeper consciousness on how and what we eat or don’t eat, supporting the appreciation of diversity by discovering (intercultural) differences and similarities connected with food, understanding that even our eating customs have a history, reflecting the interconnections between history and individual biography.
- It is a universal method which works very well in international and multicultural settings. It is a rather simple exercise in terms of instruction, materials and time needed. All our biographies are somehow entangled with food, with eating and drinking regardless of our nationality, age, education, etc. To reflect on our biographies by choosing the topic of food is a “soft” approach to biographical and historical work, applicable to various contexts.

- **For whom and what is this activity suitable?** My food biography can be used in different adult education settings, such as intercultural workshops, seminars (for example about family life), in intergenerational settings (working with young and elderly people).
- **Requirements:** Flipchart, sheets of paper, markers, pens of different colours.
- Size of each group: up to 15 participants.
- **The time in total:** around 60–90 minutes (depending on the size of the group), including individual work and presentation.

Phase 3: The River of Time

Visual presentation of the combination of biography and history, it also means the presentation of the interconnections between the personal and the political, between what is deeply private and what is general and social.

Application of the activity the River of Time:

- The River of Time can be defined differently such as the history of the European Union, the history of the women’s emancipation, a political and cultural history of a society, city, nation etc.
- It is defined by drawing/hanging a horizontal line on the wall. The line can be drawn on a long piece of paper. It can also be marked by tape on the wall. The chronological years can be written on the tape. The special, chosen events should be marked on the tape. It should be three to five metres long. Some years are marked by pictures or written information with exact dates. It is the framework which should be used by participants.
- This exercise requires a former process of memory work on an individual biography of each participant. The memory work takes place in pairs or in small groups. The examples of memory work are:
- If the River of Time is about the history of an organisation, the former memory work should be about, for example, “My first time/contact with that organisation” or “My best experience with it”.
 - If the River of Time is about the history of women’s emancipation, the former memory work should be about, for example, “My individual success story: what I did in my life, what I understand as my success” especially despite having heard comments such as “This is it not for women”, “As a woman I should better do something else” or “Women are not for that”.
 - If the River of Time is about the history of the European Union, the former memory work can be about, for example, “My first travel

beyond the Iron Curtain”, “My own discovering of the East (or West respectively)”, “How was the taste of the East (or West) for me like”.

- After the individual memory work, the participants add their individual marks to the general River of Time. They can choose the form: either as a picture, photo, short text or a single word, always connected to the chronology.
- **Recommendation:** The educator may prepare some cards with relevant names or pictures in advance. In such cases, the participants can choose a card, explain the content and fix it finally on the timeline. Also, pens and markers of different colours, old colourful magazines, tape may be useful.
- That exercise lets the participants reflect on their own biography and its interconnections to the broader social and cultural processes.
- This exercise is very complex and needs memory work before, as well as an inspiring and trustful atmosphere. This is the reason why it happens at the end of the cycle of biographical-historical exercises.
- **For whom is this activity suitable?** For an intergenerational group. Both young and elderly participants are needed. The age differences bring dynamics in exchanging the content. Especially the older participants are required since they bring more biographical material with them. The participants are asked earlier to bring memory objects with them, e.g. photos.

PROS AND CONS OF USING THIS METHOD

The whole JOW method enables us to realise the social and cultural interconnections and to overcome isolation. It can integrate the group very well. Participants can learn from each other the meanings of things coming from different cultures. This method is also helpful in increasing the ability to listen to the silent voice of people from marginalised groups.

One of the **cons** of this method may be the risk of traumatising the participants, as according to this method, women have to share their strong past experiences in front of strangers. This puts them in a vulnerable and potentially traumatic position. This means that the educator must be very well trained and also sensitive to the situation. It's good to prepare the women for the fact that this method might trigger strong emotions for them. Also, the whole method needs lots of time and space.

“The women we visited in Jugov impressed me a lot – their fates, what they lived through, and most importantly, **HOW THEY TALKED ABOUT IT!** They were ordinary, simple people. At the same time, their life experience and wisdom they told about.”

– Tatjana, participant of eFka's intergenerational projects

JOWs workshop about overcoming the Iron Curtain in Europe.
Photo: archive of eFka



Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy uses literature to provide information, support and guidance to clients in the form of reading books and stories. It is often used to support other forms of therapy.¹

Bibliotherapy can help facilitate empathy, insight, conversation, and self-growth. It can help the client gain a deeper understanding of the concerns that brought them into counselling sessions in the first place. It can be useful to tackle a variety of conditions including anxiety, depression and existential concerns as well as racism, sexism and ageism.

Studies have shown that bibliotherapy has successfully reduced depressive symptoms in adults with mild depression, helped those struggling with eating disorders, and reduced anxiety and stress among college students engaged in 10 weeks of mindfulness-based stress reduction bibliotherapy.²

*“The more you read, the more things you will know.
The more you learn, the more places you’ll go.”
Dr. Seuss*

PROS AND CONS OF USING THIS METHOD

The advantages of bibliotherapy are that the reading can be done in the client’s own time so they have more time to reflect on their issues and there is less pressure to communicate with the therapist immediately in the first session. It can help the client gain a deeper understanding of the concerns that led them to have counselling in the first place. Bibliotherapy also helps to improve communication and encourages more in-depth conversations and connections for participants.

The disadvantages of bibliotherapy are that it requires the client to be willing to read. As such, this method is not suitable for those who do not enjoy reading or who have a limited attention span. Bibliotherapy is also time-consuming as it requires the client to read in their spare time outside of the counselling sessions so it is not suitable for those with busy lifestyles who do not have time to read.



*Process of Bibliotherapy.
Photo: Dagmar Matulíková*

FOR WHOM IS THIS METHOD SUITABLE?

Bibliotherapy is suitable for people of all ages. It can be done in both individual and group settings.

Also, the Bibliotherapy method could be adapted, depending on the target group and its specific needs.

APPLICATION OF BIBLIOTHERAPY METHOD – STEP BY STEP:

Requirements

- A room to act as a meeting space for the counsellor and client/s.
- Appropriate literature and books suited to the client's needs.

Method

- The counsellor discusses the problems and stress areas in their client's life.
- Based on the discussion, the counsellor prescribes a book or story for the client to read.
- After the client has read the book or story, the counsellor and the client discuss the way the book's protagonist handled their problems and the applicability of the solution or solutions in the book to the client's situation.

Empowering Youth Through Group Activities

A group activity involves one or more counsellors working with a group of clients at the same time. Group sizes can vary from as small as three or four people to as big as eight to 12 people. Group activity sessions are either open for new participants to join at any time or closed where only a core group of members participate each time.¹

Group activities can be used to treat a wide variety of conditions including depression, panic disorder and phobias. They can boost participants' self-esteem and confidence as they share their strengths and help others in the group. Sharing their feelings with a group of people can also help to relieve pain, guilt or stress associated with their experiences. As the group contains members at different stages of the treatment process, it can instil hope in those who are at the beginning of the process as they see others who are coping or recovering during the later stages of their treatment. The counsellor is also able to see how the clients interact and behave in social situations with other people which can provide the therapist with valuable information to inform their treatment of the clients.²

Group activities are a more affordable and social alternative to an individual therapy. They allow clients to practise new behaviours in a safe and supportive environment and also create role models for those who are at the beginning of their treatment process as they see others in the group who are successfully coping with their problems. They can help clients to feel less alone as the participants receive encouragement from the group. A group activity to empower people can foster valuable friendships and create a support network for those who are struggling.³

PROS AND CONS OF USING THIS METHOD

The advantages of group sessions are that they provide a safe space for participants to practise new behaviours in a supportive environment without the fear of failure. As the group is there for a common purpose, members gain a sense of belonging and acceptance in the group. It can also help people realise that they are not alone in what they are going through as they see others who have similar experiences and problems to them.

The disadvantages of group activities are that they may not suit people who are shy, timid and reluctant to talk and share in big-group situations with strangers. The counsellors are also unable to focus on one person's individual problems so the clients do not get as much attention and advice from the counsellors themselves as they would in an individual activity.

FOR WHOM IS THIS METHOD SUITABLE?

Group sessions are suitable for teenagers and adults who are not currently in crisis. If the client is currently in crisis, an individual therapy is a more suitable option than such a group activity.

APPLICATION OF THE METHOD EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH GROUP ACTIVITIES – STEP BY STEP:

Requirements

- A room where the chairs are arranged in a large circle so that the clients can see every group member in the room.

Method

- Members of the group introduce themselves and share why they are in the group activity.
- Members share their experiences and progress since the last meeting.
- The therapist runs the group as they see fit, either in a free-form style of dialogue or according to a specific plan which may include the clients practising new skills with each other.

Art As A Technique To Empower People

Art techniques use artistic methods and the creative process to treat psychological disorders and improve mental health. They use art as a healing strategy to help people explore self-expression and gain personal insight to develop new coping skills. Art techniques are based on the idea that creative expression can foster healing and mental well-being. They are used to help people in treatment, develop self-awareness, explore emotions, address unresolved emotional conflicts, improve social skills and raise self-esteem.¹

Art techniques can include:

- Collage;
- Colouring;
- Doodling and scribbling;
- Drawing;
- Finger painting;
- Painting;
- Photography;
- Sculpting;
- Working with clay.

Art techniques are a type of creative activities. Other types of creative techniques include:

- Dance;
- Drama and expressive therapy;
- Music;
- Writing.

Art techniques are useful because they can be used to treat a wide range of mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, emotional difficulties and post-traumatic stress disorder. The ability to be creative and express themselves through art has helped the clients who have experienced emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse and other psychological issues.



*During the workshop "Art as a technique to empower people".
Photo: Cătălina Meiroșu*

Existing research suggests that art techniques are beneficial to a range of different people. For instance, in studies of adults who experienced trauma, art techniques were found to significantly reduce trauma symptoms and decrease levels of depression. Another study found that art techniques helped patients undergoing medical treatment for cancer improve their quality of life and alleviated a variety of psychological symptoms. However, these studies are often small and inconclusive so further research is needed to determine how and when art techniques are the most beneficial.²

PROS AND CONS OF USING THIS METHOD

The advantages of art techniques are that anyone regardless of their artistic ability can participate and benefit from them. It has also been shown to reduce stress levels and have a positive effect on mental health, regardless of artistic experience or talent. A variety of methods and techniques can be used in art techniques such as drawing, painting, sculpture and collage. The diversity of methods can mean clients are less likely to get bored of doing art techniques. Another advantage is that clients encounter fewer language barriers (if it is the case of multicultural groups) while they are involved in creative activities.

The disadvantages of art techniques are that adults who believe they are not creative or artistic might be resistant or sceptical of the process. Art techniques are not effective for all types of mental health conditions either. For instance, one meta-analysis found that art therapy is not effective in reducing positive or negative symptoms of schizophrenia.³

FOR WHOM IS THIS METHOD SUITABLE?

Art techniques are suitable for people of all ages regardless of their artistic ability.

APPLICATION OF THE ART TECHNIQUES METHOD - STEP BY STEP:

Requirements

- Art materials can include paper, paint, colouring pens, canvas, water, camera.
- A quiet, clean space where the client can use the materials to create their art.

Method

- The client uses the available materials to create a piece of artwork that reflects their thoughts, feelings and emotions.
- The educator discusses the meaning of the artwork with the client and discusses any key messages and conclusions.

Women during "speed dating" job interview, which is activity included in Competence Kaleidoscope.
Photo: Archive of GIC NORA, 2018



Competence Kaleidoscope Course at Work

The course was designed and developed within the Erasmus+ strategic project (2015–2018) implemented by four non-governmental European organisations – Akropolis (CZ), Gender information centre NORA (CZ), migrare Zentrum für MigrantInnen (AT) and Miesto pod Slnkom (SK).

The course helps to increase one's self-confidence and trust in one's abilities. It teaches participants to identify what they can do and what they can offer on the job market. Successful course participants are empowered by increased awareness of their competencies, have more potential for confident self-presentation and find themselves in a fair position on the job market. The course helps with a career restart when transitioning from unemployment or economic inactivity towards (self)employment, or when switching jobs.

Main aims of the course:

- To instigate/stimulate a new point of view of oneself and one's competencies;
- To realise how past experience shapes one's competencies;
- To identify and present own (current) competencies;
- To be able to set a career goal relevant to the current context.

The course consists of 32 hours divided into eight modules of face-to-face sessions with homework based on the activities in the modules. Homework is a crucial part of the course, as it enables the participants to consider their life paths, re-evaluate the way they perceive themselves and gain new perspectives. More information on the Competence Kaleidoscope method is to be found at: <https://www.gendernora.cz/mapovani-kompetenci-nora/>. Also, a complete booklet full of activities is available for downloading there.

Lessons learnt from pilot sessions

During 2021 and 2022, a team of five partner organisations piloted and tested the methods described above with their clientele and other target groups. The aim was to identify the imperfections and to draw attention to them for other social workers, counsellors and others in the field of adult education who would like to use these methods.

In this chapter, we present the key lessons we took away from the courses on each method, be it positive feedback, recommendations or negative experiences.

The theatre of the oppressed:

Pilot session A) by GIC NORA

- Unfortunately, homeless women were not interested in this method. Piloting on this target group could not take place.
- Therefore, we focused our attention on a group of youth from one of the excluded localities in the Czech Republic. In this area there is an increased rate of substance use (especially alcohol) and already at a young age. At the same time, the youth are at risk of gender-based violence, both at home and in the public sphere. Moreover, there is a higher unemployment rate.
- We start with some warm-up activities (sociometric activities, conductor, move and sound, etc.). From the beginning, few clients were shy. These warm-up activities worked as an icebreaker. All activities were voluntary. Initially, a few individuals did not participate, but gradually they joined and, in the end, everyone cooperated. Warm-up activities have thus fulfilled their task. We definitely recommend including them at the beginning of every workshop.
- **The time** of the course was 2 hours. And that is, in our opinion, the shortest possible time in which the method of the Theatre of the Oppressed can be mastered. We recommend to set a longer time limit.
- **The topic** we focused on **was conflict resolution**. A big part of this topic was aimed at the question of how to solve any conflict without using physical violence. Most of the clients still believe that it is alright to use punching or poking against each other. Several of them experienced gender-based violence or toxic masculinity (although they cannot name it that way themselves) and copied these mechanisms.
- It was great to open this difficult topic in a safe and informal environment.
- **Feedback and findings:**
 - The facilitator has to gain more experiences to feel more confident in that role.
 - The group we piloted the Theatre of the Oppressed with was too big (around 20 clients). It's good to do a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop in a smaller group. In a larger group, everyone has less space to express their opinion or express themselves. At the same time, in a larger group, especially if you're working with a group



During the Theatre of the Oppressed method.
Photo: Gudrun Pürner



Counting of votes.
Photo: Dagmar Matulíková

of teenagers, clients are more likely to not pay attention and talk amongst themselves. This is very distracting to the work.

- It is preferable to use a larger format of red and green paper during voting. It is easier for the workshop facilitator to see and it takes only a short time to count the votes.
- In a really big room it is more difficult to create the right atmosphere. It is possible to help, for example, by dimming the lights or using some decorations to make the clients feel comfortable.
- Friday afternoon is not an ideal time for this method. Most of the clients are already focused on other things.

Pilot course B) by Peregrina

- **The topic** we focused on **was finding a job**, surviving a job interview.
- **Objective:** Empowerment, strengthening self-confidence regarding a professional career, a successful job interview.
- 17 participants of a B2-level German course at Peregrina, from more than 10 different countries (e.g. Turkey, Ukraine, Egypt, Syria, China and Colombia), diverse in age and educational backgrounds and working careers. All of them were involved in precarious or difficult life situations (job search, financial problems, family difficulties, problems with residence status, psychological stress, discrimination – e.g. because of wearing headscarves, etc.).
- Regarding the **time**, 3 hours were at our disposal, more is advisable.
- Both, a large seminar room and the courtyard/garden were available for the exercises.
- Different methods of the Erasmus+ project were applied and modified. We started with the warm-up activities. It was fun, an interesting object was interpreted by all the participants in their own pantomimic and creative way. Warm-up exercises worked as warming up for the theatre method.
- We connected the method of the Theatre of the Oppressed with the Competence Kaleidoscope method, and it was a great choice. Thanks to that, we started with the “speed dating” job interview activity from Competence Kaleidoscope. Participants played their own job interview with a partner. First acting as themselves in the situation of an interview for a job, they wanted to have in real life, the partner acted as an interviewer. After role swapping, the women were in the role of their interviewer. So each woman could find herself in this challenging situation of a job interview as well as see the perspective of her interviewer.
- After that, the exchange of findings and feelings after the speed dating exercise as well as the experiences they have had in real-life

job interviews, e.g. difficulties and problems like e.g. a racist and sexist employer, a lack of understanding because the employer speaks a dialect, sensitive questions about pregnancy, money problems or long unemployment.

- One of these topics was then chosen and developed by the whole group for acting out. The participants were briefly introduced to the rules of the Theatre of the Oppressed and were encouraged to take over from the “actresses” at any time. The trainers began to act out the conflict to facilitate as the participants were a bit reluctant. But then they felt encouraged to take the opportunity to role-play and change the “script” according to their ideas. In the end, everybody took the chance to play both, the employer and the applicant.
- **Feedback and findings from the participants:**
 - The theatre method reduces fear to speak more German. I enjoyed it very much.
 - When I played the role of the applicant I was very nervous. As the director, I felt lighter.
 - I liked very much the liberation and the expansion of my thinking limits.
 - The biggest problem for me is German; today I learned what to do when I don't understand a question.
 - If I had done the workshop before my last job interview, I would have been much more confident there.
 - More time needed.
 - More tips and means of expression for job interview situations
- **Feedback and findings from trainers:**
 - Our fears that the women would not want to play were unfounded.
 - The participants seemed to have a lot of fun stepping out of their roles as marginalised women.
 - More training and experience in the theatre method are needed to be more confident using it with others.

Walk and talk

Pilot course A) by MyMamy / Transfer

- The method of Walk and Talk was used in a specific situation of career counselling for Ukrainian refugee women. The group of four women and one young man (the son of one of the clients, aged 17) have lived in our Safe Women's House since the beginning of March and after the first weeks of the adaptation process, they started to think about the possibility of some permanent income, e.g. to find some job opportunities. As all of them came from a crucial experience of abandoning their homeland because of the war, we did not ask them to stay all the time in one place – in our office – and have a feeling of being prisoners, so we decided to arrange various counselling but also leisure time activities outdoors. One possibility was to combine their will for work in a new provisional home with Walk and Talk career counselling on the move.
- The river banks are the right places for this method as they are quiet enough mainly during working hours when most inhabitants of the blocs of flat located on one riverside are at work. It is good to know where the best place to stop and talk is and not to be disturbed by a large number of passers-by. Moreover, with such a specific group it was necessary to also expect some kind of ventilation connected with the stress they all came through recently.
- There was no paper and pen used as this method was used for the first discussion of the ideas of what can be a possible direction of their job interests and after this first session, each of the clients have their social advisor who would continue to undertake practical steps to fulfil the expectations of the clients.
- The discussed **topics** were: a daily routine after settled down in the Safe Women's House, what kind of job they are looking for and how they can manage financial situation.
- During the closing session, we stopped in a historical trees alley, sat on benches and summed up what conclusions we came to and how we will cooperate in the near future to achieve the results.
- **Feedback and findings:**
 - It was useful for overcoming emotional blockages and drawing clients' attention to themselves and to the new environment, to show them and open up new perspectives, and for sure, breakdown hierarchies in the counselling relationship – the counsellor is not an active social worker, in fact, the head of the organization is not

working directly with the clients, so they can be open about their ideas and be less strict and less constructive during discussions as it is expected during standard counselling sessions. It looks like it helped to open them to a deeper perception of their new situation. It was adequate to start with this kind of discussion after some time, as they need first of all some rest, and gradually build up feelings of security. The idea to combine the discussion with a kind of short sightseeing was accepted in a very positive way.

- In this case, the language was a problem, we can work with Russian to some extent and English as well, but walking and trying to understand and communicate in a combination of foreign languages was quite demanding.
- The other disadvantage was that as we did not use paper and pens it was important for the counsellor to remember all the important information and then not forget to inform each particular social worker about the discussed results.

Pilot course B) by eFKa

- **The participants** were two women, one of them was over 75 years old, the second was an overweight migrant woman.
- **The topics** discussed were life stories because these women have a limited opportunity to meet live to talk about themselves and their situations. Future possibilities and interests were also discussed.
- **Feedback and findings:**
 - That walk was exactly what the older person needed in the pandemic times. For a person who had been enclosed in four walls for a long time, being outside, having contact with the nature and other experiences was absolutely supportive.
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, counselling on the move was an opportunity to meet the clients and support them with a low risk of contracting the virus.
 - With regards to the clients, a longer walk required an effort. It was reasonable to plan benches on the way and make short breaks. The overweight client got tired quite quickly and we had make frequent stops.
 - In the case of the migrant client, the route had to be near her home and her usual bus stop. The woman was new in the city and didn't feel comfortable to be far away from the area she'd already got familiar with.
 - There were lots of emotions in the conversation and it was better to move rather than sit still.

- The disadvantage is that speaking is crucial in this method so people of different mother tongues may face language barriers. When communicating with the migrant, situations of mutual misunderstanding arose. In this case, introducing an artistic technique might be a good idea to facilitate communication.

Pilot course C) by GIC NORA

- Clients of the Walk and Talk method were women experiencing gender based violence. Some of them were also with a mild physical disability (visually impaired). The method was thus individually tailored to the client's needs, e.g. the possibility of sitting on a bench.
- The topics we covered were basic social counselling (benefits, services of different institutions and organisations) and family and relationship topics (e.g. identifying the difficulties).
- **Feedback and findings:**
 - Compared to a traditional office session, counselling on the move has some disadvantages: in the office, it is easier to structure work, the counsellor has more control over time – the clock is hanging on the wall right behind the client so the control is less obvious. In the office, the counsellor can hand over more printed information or contacts right at the consultation (print from the computer, hand out flyers, etc.). It feels safer for the counsellor to be in the office – in case there is a problem, the colleagues are usually in the next office for a quick consultation, help with difficult clients or finding out information. On the other hand, in the office the client is in an alien environment in which he or she may feel more “subordinate” than an equal partner. The environment remotely resembles a doctor's “office” – waiting in the corridor on chairs, a filing cabinet – may reinforce the expectation of being treated like a doctor.
 - According to the Walk and Talk method, the client can choose where to meet, adapt the circumstances to themselves (place and where to walk). The client can take a more active role and tilt the circumstances in their own image because they can, but do not have to, choose the environment.
 - It is easier to establish an initial “small talk” and create a more relaxed atmosphere (e.g. current reactions to the place and what is happening in the area such as flowers blossoming, a construction site, the appearance of the place).
 - For me, as a social worker, it is more challenging because I have to monitor the place around me and the client. So I have to be as focused as possible both on the conversation (active listening,

of a set of activities that involved knowing and getting to know each other's background. The young women worked either in groups of two or together.

- Also, we used the Half Portraits activity as a preparatory activity for art techniques. The young women worked in pairs and drew half portraits of their partner, and later there were parallel sessions about "How we see ourselves vs. how others see us".
- The session ended with a joint brainstorming and a question and answer session as well as with feedback given to each other and about the usefulness of this exercise.
- **Feedback and findings:**
 - Using printed images, paintings and animations as well as a four-column page (see below an example), the participants were invited to choose the images that fit each frame so that when put together they described their personal past experience, knowledge, and barriers to achieving what they want at a professional level.
 - In the end, everyone obtained a mood board of images which they could present together with the other participants. The board showed their past experience and skills as well as what they want to do and what prevents them from reaching the result.

Two examples of mood boards realised by the participants (Romanian version – see the template in English above)
Photo: Cătălina Meiroşu



WHERE I AM NOW	WHAT I WANT TO DO IN THE FUTURE
WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS	WHAT DO I NEED TO ACHIEVE A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

- **Feedback from participants:**
 - "It was something new for me, I have never been involved in such an interactive activity"
 - "I think this experience will help me in the long run. By participating in the group activities, I found out new things about the other girls and about the problems they face"
 - "To us, it is more difficult to do such things. I want to have a job, to be able to get by. These games help me in that sense. I enjoyed the activity where I had to face "who I am now" and "what I want to achieve". I will think more often about such differences. I hope it will help me."

Competence kaleidoscope course at work

Pilot course A) by CRPE

- **The participants** were 12 girls/women aged 16 to 29, all coming from vulnerable groups (either NEETs or from Roma communities) from a rural community on the outskirts of Bucharest and some of them have finished high school (usually vocational high school).
- The activity consisted of a selection of activities to identify and measure the competencies, previous experiences and the support group of each participant. It started with a "my network" type of activity, through which the participants identified the important cores of people that their support group consist of – family, other relatives, friends, teachers, employers (if any), etc. Depending on the positioning of the support group, it was possible to evaluate the most important people and those with the least contribution.
- Also, we carried out a "role play" type of activity in which the participants were grouped into two categories: employer and young woman participating in an interview with the employer for a job in a specific field (manicurist and hairdresser, factory worker, shop/sales assistant, babysitter, desk officer). We thus tested each young woman's ability

to: express herself at an interview, ask and answer questions and put herself in the employer's position to understand the main requirements in order to obtain a job or traineeship.

- **Findings and feedback:**

- Complementarily, we worked with a series of cards/sheets of paper to identify professional and personal experiences (positive, negative, lessons learned), personal assets and needs in order to obtain a job/traineeship.
- Before the actual activity, it is good to offer to participants tips and tricks.

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The handbook is primarily written for career counsellors, social workers and educators dealing with diverse groups of socially disadvantaged women in the European Union. It is aimed also at those who are interested in the topic in question.

The handbook is purposefully written in a very practical way. It depicts several very concrete methods and techniques that can be used in work with the socially disadvantaged. All these methods and techniques are to empower groups of socially disadvantaged people, in our case multiple discriminated women.