

Sowing the seeds of Training and Learning in Community Development

<http://tl4cd.wordpress.com/>

This paper reflects the outline of the common message of the Consortium for Training and Learning for Community Development consisting in 16 European partners.

WHO ARE WE?

The consortium on Training and Learning for Community Development:

- designed to maximise training material related to civic skills for the professional development of trainers, on the basis of intensive, co-ordinated networking
- addresses specifically the current gaps in training and learning to meet the needs of those working within communities to support capacity building and empowerment

Main aim of the consortium

- take the lead in networking to apply the results and outcomes of past and current Lifelong Learning Program actions to the field of community-based training and learning, drawing maximum benefit from the exchange of good practice and implications for European policy for community-based training and learning.

The consortium's objectives:

- Link the core principles of Community Development to training and learning systems working from a national level to a European level within the context of the Lifelong Learning Program
- Set up an interactive network combining relay visits from country to country backed up by electronic networking and increased mobility for exchange of learning and good practice linking the national and European level and linking into related networks
- Increase networking from good practice to policy specifically in relationship to the draft European guidelines for training and learning for community development developed in Budapest in 2006 and extrapolate shared lessons from exchanges in line with the Open Method of Co-ordination.

"TRAINING AND LEARNING IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT" PROJECT

Values and Principles of the TLCD project

- Participatory (engages with the grassroots agenda)
- Creative (involves thinking "outside the box"; flexible, dynamic and innovative)
- Embraces positive thinking (considers learning and training for community development as a challenge rather than a problem)
- Seeks to empower community development actors for their work in the field and for negotiating with political decision makers
- Enjoyable / Fun-filled
- Emotional / Passionate
- Sustainable

Methodology of the TLCD project

- Sharing best practices on community development
- Inspiration / Stimulation
- Confidence-building
- Vision-building
- Aimed particularly at community development workers who want to improve their knowledge and skills on community development

Aims of the TLCD project

- Promote creativity, flexibility and innovation
- Facilitate grassroots participation
- Encourage experiential learning
- Support mutual learning through networking, regular reunions (for example collegial supervision meetings every 15 days) etc.
- Communicate/provide existing and/or new information on community development
- Stimulate writing/publications
- Integrate new media technologies (such as internet research, blogs etc.)
- Aim to have an added value/multiplier effect for community development

3 categories of Target Groups of TLCD

- ❖ Political - policy makers, civil servants and authorities in general with a focus on specific groups for specific objectives (i.e. elected representatives, people who design curricula, and people in charge of funding)
- ❖ Public - civil society groups and 'silent' groups; the local community (all citizens) and also specific target groups (voluntary organisations, business people/organisations, minority groups, artists etc.)
- ❖ Professionals - those who are in paid work (professionals in NGOs, Community Workers/Community Development Workers in NGOs or statutory bodies, professionals in centres of education and schools, businesses, institutions, health professionals, experts)

BACKGROUND

- 39 representatives, 17 countries - a seminar hosted in Budapest by The Hungarian Association for Community Development (March 30th – April 2nd 2006), within a previous project (Grundtvig 4 Program - Thematic Network) developed by partner-organisations from Hungary, United Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Romania, the Netherlands, Italy and Ireland
- a mix of disciplines – teachers, trainers, community workers/developers, social workers, advisers/consultants and managers
- NGOs sharing the view that community development has a potentially unique contribution to make to the field of lifelong learning
- work based on definitions of community development, developed by practitioners in community development in a European Union funded project on Good Practice.
- experience of working in diverse communities - common elements of good practice in training and learning for community development, a first step to developing European Guidelines
- result: a document on Guidelines on TLCD

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM BEING PART OF THE NETWORK?

Partners used the mobility for exchange of good practice in relay visits and carried analysis of TLCD from Belgium to Hungary; from Hungary to the United Kingdom; from the United Kingdom to Slovakia; and from Slovakia to Germany. These mobilities were backed up by electronic networking and relay visits included field visits. The involvement of local professionals from local authorities, national NGOs and educational organisations enriched the level of exchange and learning from practice in the triangle of exchange identified in the Grundtvig 4 project.

Creating a Laboratory for distilling lessons

- ✓ A Laboratory was organized in Sweden in October 2008, where partners distilled lessons from relay visits to make the process of networking and dissemination relevant to the 150 multipliers who would interact with the partners.
- ✓ The "Laboratory" setting was created to test out whether and how TLCD can create multipliers in the public, policy-making and professional arenas. Some core points from guidance training and learning for community development were tested for transferability and sustainability in the Laboratory setting.
- ✓ The Laboratory was divided in two important parts: analysing the relay visits organised during the project (looking at the past) and planning the dissemination and multiplication of results (looking at the future).

Dissemination seminar

- ✓ key multipliers invited to the final seminar, to distil the main points of consensus and identify how to maximise the results of the project in relation to other Grundtvig projects and networks.
- ✓ identify the means of maintaining momentum and organisation of networking, to increase accessibility and transparency between local, regional, national and European levels with regard to TLCD
- ✓ link the training and learning needs of NGOs and staff of local and national government who work to support opportunities for community-based TLCD.

Interactive dissemination

- ✓ based on the concept identified in the guidelines and reiterated in the relay visits and laboratory that training and learning is an interactive process.

- ✓ methods and techniques for training have to be adjusted to the context and to the participants, whilst maintaining adherence to the highest standards of practice in training and learning combined with a high level of engagement with lifelong learning, the principles of equality and intercultural exchange.

Multiplication and dissemination

- ✓ all target groups including professionals, community leaders and activists are seen as potential multipliers of community development principles and practices through the development of skills and capacities.
- ✓ identify key multipliers in countries not represented in the consortium and ensure transfer between government and non-government organisations and staff
- ✓ including the key multipliers in active and on-going dissemination of the results of the project through existing networks, meetings etc. and through electronic networking which will supplement work done at the meeting of multipliers
- ✓ interactive sustainable exchange on implementing, adapting and evaluating European guidelines for TLCD based on previous Grundtvig programmes

JOIN THE NETWORK ON TLCD !

WHAT'S IN THERE FOR YOU?

- ✓ opportunities for exchanging ideas among professionals in the field of community development and compare different practices and approaches shaped by different national contexts.
- ✓ connect in a meaningful way professionals in the area of community development which otherwise have very few opportunities to meet in Europe
- ✓ each partner's context would be specific, yet the lessons drawn at a European level could be used to influence community development practices of training and learning in various national approaches

GET INSPIRED, GIVE AND TAKE !

- Access to diversity – create new ways for over passing national gaps
- Continue exchange on good practice, towards concrete impact
- Bring together considerable experience
- Involve the grass root level
- DO's and DON'Ts in TLCD and how community development is done

There is no simple recipe that can be applied to every situation !

Yet

There are commonalities of experience that can be used as points of reference or 'illuminators' of practice !

- ❖ Any training programme on community development should take the context of the training into account in its design and delivery and the training or learning should be related to practice in real situations.
- ❖ European Guidelines should be flexible enough to be adapted to the specific situation. The guidelines may be useful as a indication of the potential for links between the one local situation and another.
- ❖ It is the responsibility of the body at the lowest local point to set the points of common interest in the local context and make the connections to provision for training and learning for community development at a national and regional level.

CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Sustainability of training and learning programmes
- Recognition of learning in Community Development
- How to improve legislation for public participation

FURTHER STEPS TO BE TAKEN in order to...

- Make such initiatives later on lead towards building a big common initiative at the European level (i.e. common event, Study Program in the area of community development acknowledged all over Europe)

- Develop projects to build towards more substantial common action in the future.