



fundació **cat**alunya voluntària

NGO Minorities of Europe

Training Course

„BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE OF DIVERSE FAITH – INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AS A TOOL IN YOUTH WORK“

Gateshead, United Kingdom

April 7-14, 2010



Six years without a head!?

No head, no mind, no understanding, no meaning! Can you imagine if that would happen to a human kind? It would bring about catastrophe. The monument of Earl Grey¹ had lost its head due to a thunderstorm and got reconstructed 6 years later. It is now proudly standing in the centre of Newcastle, England. Can all of us do the same – stand proudly next to each other, respecting different faiths? We, who still have our minds - can we open them towards different religions and beliefs not attempting to make one religion, but helping young people from different faiths to understand, communicate and act alongside each other? Yes, we have to! *"There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions"* (Hans Küng, Swiss Catholic priest and Theologian)

Why training course about interfaith?

Interfaith is what happens when more than one religion is discussed from a position of respect. NGO Minorities of Europe created time and space for interfaith dialogue in April 7-14, 2010 inviting 9

¹ Earl Grey was the constant advocate of peace and the fearless and consistent champion of civil and religious liberty, serving as prime minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1830-1834.

organizations (*incl.* Fundació Catalunya Voluntaria) from all over Europe to meet in Newcastle, England with the aim to learn and reflect about the topic. With 20 participants from Norway, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain and Italy representing their organizations we had a great possibility to see the insight and wisdom in other faiths. The activities and learning methods aimed at raising awareness about our own beliefs and position, overcoming stereotypes, prejudices, simplistic understandings and most important – growing the respect towards other religions and people with different religious backgrounds to live together peacefully.

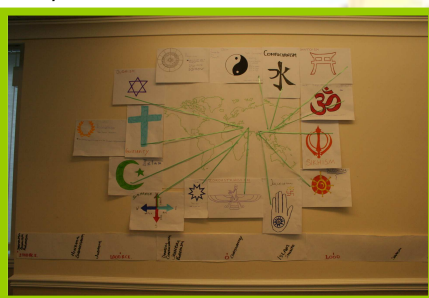
How to get us talking about faith?



Interfaith is a complex topic indeed but it is getting closer to us every day. Globalization has led to increase contact between different faith traditions - how people of different faiths relate to each other will be a key aspect of the future of the world. Therefore using and learning new different methods for interfaith dialogue in youth work is getting more and more essential.

To get young people like us talking, a fun, simple and discussion based activity "Swapping Cultures" was introduced and practiced. It is based on a list of thoughtfully prepared questions that step by step help to reveal more information about participants' beliefs. To ensure active listening, the discussion was first held in couples and later on in groups of 4 people where the previous couple had to introduce their conversation partner instead of speaking directly about themselves.

The interfaith dialogue was perfectly connected with 4 temperaments, known in psychology as choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic and melancholic. Workshop lead by professional actor included masks, strongly showing the main emotion of each temperament. With masks everyone could try to act in different characters, analyze the combination of temperaments in their personalities and see that in reality pure temperament does not exist. Knowing person's temperament can help you interpret their words. As far as you are able to notice different people you have the ability to understand why they are acting in a certain way, and also use a suitable manner by yourself to get along with them.



During the training course we could play roles in mixed temperament groups understanding that people with different characters can complement each other.

To dig more deep and reach the essence of interfaith topic, brainstorming activities worked towards understanding how we see the meaning of "religion" and "god". Brainstorming activity led to a creation of world-map with starting place as well as the timeline and creator of the religions.

More concretely, one day was devoted to discover the beliefs, culture, history and practice of Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, starting with us presenting what we knew. Later on an animation was showed about each religion and presentation made by the trainee. Another day was devoted to Islam. We debated about "supporting or opposing the veil - ban at schools". For some of the participants it was controversial and difficult to support the veil - ban because they had voted against such a law in reality in their own communities. Judaism and Christianity were the last religions to be reflected upon.





The religions of oriental countries are practiced through meditation. We could try 3 kinds of meditation techniques: physical yoga, "oum" meditation and visual meditation. In yoga it was important to concentrate on right breathing and follow physical exercises. The "oum" meditation required breathing starting from the stomach, moving up to the throat and finally filling the head with the vibration. Visual meditation helped to create team energy. We were imagining a pole of colorful strings, choosing one and feeling the connection with other participants. The second visual meditation aimed at feeling positive emotions while imagining a flame first filling our body and then filling the whole world with love. For most of the

participants meditation was a new and very relaxing experience. Everyone took the exercise seriously and there was no giggling. In addition to meditation a relaxing and thoughtful activity was coloring the *Mandalas*. We found it a good method to use in youth work in our organizations as well.

Intercultural learning

During the city orienteering activity we learned interesting facts about the training venue Newcastle. Looking for the answers by communicating with local people we also found out about Gray's monument losing its head in thunderstorm.

Workshop and intercultural evening taught us about other cultures through the brochures, traditional snacks, drinks and videos that everyone had prepared. To get to know more about our organizations NGO Fair was prepared. Starting with Dutch participants who were sharing soaps which had their organization's name on as a promotion for a movie project with children who have learning difficulties at school and finishing with Hungarians' video about their organization's activities. Meanwhile participants also taught each-other their traditional dance-steps and another cultural attraction was local red telephone booth.

What if I want to organize something similar?

Information about resources and upcoming training courses is easy to find from SALTO Youth Net (<http://www.salto-youth.net/>), which has well organized sections like "Toolbox for training" as well as "Trainers online for Youth". Introduction to Youth in Action (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm) programme enlightened us about project funding possibilities and in the end we brainstormed project ideas resulting in the outcome of organizing youth exchanges about intercultural learning, sports activities combined with drama workshops to learn expressing yourself and gain confidence, as well as we found necessary to organize a training course about religions.

That is what we did during the training course and that is how we learned about the importance of interfaith dialogue. We left with positive emotions knowing more about each other as good friends and knowing more about ourselves as wise-men ☺



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