



LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME GRUNDTVIG 2009 Workshop "Organisational Development for Active Citizenship"

2.1 organisation

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DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORKSHOP

The **target group** consists of active learners from women's community self help groups, especially Mother Centers. Community self help organisations are low threshold and as such form rich informal learning environments for women in disadvantaged socio-economic situations and they stimulate active citizenship.

They are often initiated by women with little formal education, without management experience, who "build the bicycle while riding it" and rely on their talent for improvisation. Common issues are that too few active volunteers take up too much responsibility resulting in burn out.

The workshop offers a learning opportunity shaped to the organisational needs and issues of grassroots community groups. Working forms are practical and applicable to their daily practice.

Main activities / programme of the Workshop

The workshop treats the subject of organisational development in a practical non-academic way. Participants bring in their own examples and questions, prepared beforehand.

Sunday: Getting to know each other, general introduction of the topic.

Monday: Tools to develop good communication, group involvement and leadership.
Example of Leadership Support Method (Germany)

Tuesday: Equitable cooperation between grassroots and professionals. How to avoid the pitfalls.
Example of cooperation between Roma NGO and grassroots community groups.
(Bulgaria)

Wednesday: How to create maximal participation in organisational structures and procedures.
Creating structures that fit the values of the group and avoid hierarchy/bureaucracy.
Example of the structure of the international NGO **mine** / evaluation of its functioning.

Thursday: Demand driven financing. How to finance grassroots work. Tension between wholistic approaches and specialised funding programs. Example of community budgeting.

Friday: Tools and skills to face second stage organisational challenges. Do original concepts need to adapt and change, for up-scaling and mainstreaming? What leadership skills are needed for this transition? Input from NGO EU synergy, Netherlands.

Saturday: Wrap-up, conclusions, evaluation.

Expected outputs (especially in terms of the learning outcomes for the participants)

Participants are exposed to several good practices and innovative methods of organisational development, that will allow them to deal with issues in their own group. Participants get insight in the functioning of organisational mechanisms and receive new information in a format adapted to their needs. The peer learning format of the workshop allows participants to share their own lessons learned and to strengthen grassroots networking across Europe.

Description: Background, Objectives, Methodology

Explain the rationale of and background to the Workshop

The Nest! Foundation and its board members have been actively supporting the Mother Center movement for years. Mother Centers are self-managed community meeting places, providing support to families of often marginalised background. They increase social cohesion in communities and provide a rich setting for informal learning and empowerment.

Mother Centers are in most cases not set up for the target group by professional welfare workers, but by the women themselves, to suit their own needs. By organising their Mother Center, the women learn a lot of management skills. Learning by doing is the best way of learning to begin with and is especially appropriate for people with little formal education who often have an aversion towards "school-like settings".

However, the self help nature of the movement also has serious disadvantages. Organisational structures tend to be weak and often depend on a few active volunteers who risk being overburdened. Management of Centers is rather improvised and access to funding is often difficult. In most of the approximately 750 Mother Centers that exist throughout Europe there is a distinct educational need to strengthen the organisational capacity of these volunteers, in order to maintain the learning environment in which they are active.

Existing training courses or workshops on organisational development are not really appropriate to the target group. They often deal with abstract notions or corporate approaches. The target group is however not academic and theoretical knowledge does not land well with them and they are often not comfortable with the corporate culture. That is why we see a great need to offer workshops that relate to the way the issues are framed and experienced in community groups and that offer practical approaches, presented by peers in order to enhance the self organising force of community groups.

Objectives:

- Offer opportunities to active citizens from different EU countries to exchange ideas and practices of organisational models fit to the needs of community groups and discuss problems related to organising community groups and informal learning environments with peers.
- Enhance the knowledge and strengthen the skills and capacities of grassroots participants to deal with issues related to organisational development.
- Document the experiences and examples of participants to allow further dissemination and transfer of good practices.
- Strengthen European collaboration and networking amongst groups that provide informal learning environments to disadvantaged groups.

The workshop will provide a participant oriented format for extracting and exchanging practical experiences and lessons learned on the ground. At the same time it will offer informational input from other areas of society, drawing out how it relates to community issues. Learning from other people like yourself who experience the same problems is a powerful method of learning, especially appropriate for people who have bad experiences with schools as is often the case in this target group. This setting allows for a relaxed atmosphere to actively contribute, absorb new information as well as network with learners from other countries at the same time. By offering a non academic approach to the subject, focussing on concrete tools and strategies and allowing sufficient space for peer learning, participants gain insights and acquire skills that they can apply directly at home.

what is **innovative** about the Workshop,

The workshop defines the teaching from the perspective of the learners. Exchange of ideas and discussion between the participants from different countries is as important as informational input from the workshop leaders. This way we will start building up a new body of knowledge of organisational development as defined by active participants of community groups themselves.

We strive to have 10 countries represented, with 2 participants from each country taking part in the workshop. As different as the cultural, social and economic settings of countries as diverse as Belgium and Bulgaria or as far apart as Norway and Spain may be, the issues faced by community groups are often similar. Frequently such groups have difficulty finding information appropriate to their situation in their own environment. It often proves to be an inspiring eye-opener to find groups from different countries, dealing with similar issues. Learning to cope with them together is a strong bonding mechanism and a good base for further European networking.

Indicate the main **pedagogical and didactical approaches**

The workshop will be using many of the didactical approaches as developed for the GWIA (Grassroots Women's International Academy) that enable participants to be teachers of their own knowledge as well as recipients of new information and ways of looking at their own practice. To allow for exchange and hear from other countries plenary sessions will be used. Presented topics will be elaborated further in small working groups to assure even the most timid are involved and express themselves. An active attitude of the learners is encouraged in several ways. For one thing they prepare the material at home to assure that they have formulated their learning objectives and questions as well as reflected on their own knowledge and experience in advance. They will do the preparation together with their community group on the one hand to provide the learner with group support and on the other hand to assure that the knowhow acquired in the workshop will be shared at home and benefit not only the individual learners, but also the group at large.

Specify the direct and indirect **target groups** of the Workshop.

The direct target group consists of active learners from women's community self help groups, especially Mother Centers. The indirect target group consists of the members of the various groups the participants come from and the networks they are active in.

Still, sustaining any of the 750 Mother Centers that exist in Europe is difficult. Common issues are that too few active volunteers take up too much responsibility resulting in burn out. The direct target group consists of those women who have been running a Mother Center or another community self help organisation and who face difficulties in assuring funding, keeping the group involved and in general running their organisation or network.

Describe the **preparatory and follow-up activities** relating to the learners

Prior to the workshop, the participants will receive guidelines to organise a preparatory meeting with their group. During this gathering the group will assist the participants to reflect on their knowledge and experience in relation to the workshop themes, as well as to prepare a set of learning objectives and questions. Besides of the question "what do we want to get out of the workshop", the participants are asked to prepare what they want to present and teach to the other participants from their experience on the subject matter.

Afterwards, they will have a similar meeting to share the learning experience with their group and discuss implementation. Monthly skype calls will be hosted by the workshop organisers after the workshop to enhance networking amongst the participants to consolidate the learning.

*** organisational arrangements of the Workshop**

The participants will be accommodated in a hotel in Zandvoort aan Zee, a beach resort on the North sea coast. Participants will have both breakfast lunches and tea breaks in this hotel where we will have a meeting room throughout the week. On evenings with plenary evening sessions, the participants will have dinner together. On the free evenings or when there are small working groups in the evening, participants will be given the option to have dinner in smaller groups.

monitoring and evaluation

Two types of evaluation will be used. First the participants are asked (as part of their preparation for the workshop) to formulate and send in their learning objectives in advance. They will evaluate the content of the workshop in relation to those goals they have set for themselves in regular reflection rounds in the working groups. In addition they will be asked to complete evaluation forms on the workshop as a total (including aspects such as the quality of the accommodation or the appropriateness of the applied methods).

On the level of the total project, part of the last day will be used for a group discussion to evaluate the usefulness of the workshop to the issues the participating groups are dealing with in their daily practice. In particular we are interested to discuss the usefulness of further EU networking amongst groups that provide informal learning environments to disadvantaged groups, and what role further meetings and workshops could play to this end.

As follow up to the workshop, each of the participants will host a meeting similar to the preparatory meeting, in their own group at home, to discuss the outcome of the workshop. The best follow up imaginable is the implementation of the results in the home situation of each of the participants.

programme

Presentations of examples by participants are indicative.

Day	Date	Indicate briefly the programme of learning activities
Arrival		<i>Depending on availability of flights some participants may arrive one day early, on Saturday the 26th of September</i>
1 Sun.	06/06/10	Morning: Arrival of participants, getting settled Afternoon: Welcome, logistic announcements, getting to know each other, Evening: General introduction of the topic
2 Mon.	07/06/10	Morning: Presentation of learning objectives by participants and general framework of evaluation by workshop leaders Afternoon: Tools to develop good communication, group involvement and leadership. Example of Leadership Support Method (Germany) Evening: Applying Leadership Support Method in small groups, reflection round
3 Tue.	08/06/10	Morning: Equitable cooperation between grassroots and professionals. How to avoid the pitfalls. General presentation and exercises in small groups. Afternoon: Example of cooperation between Roma NGO and grassroots community groups. (Bulgaria) Discussion in plenary of examples and outcome of morning discussions Evening: free evening
4 Wed.	09/06/10	Morning: Plenary: How to create maximal participation in organisational structures and procedures. Creating structures that fit the values of the group and avoids hierarchy/bureaucracy. Group exercises and reflection round in small groups: what has been learned so far? Afternoon: Example of the structure of the international NGO mine and evaluation of its functioning. Presentation of group work and plenary debate. Evening: Discussion amongst participants from Mother Centers on organisation and procedures inside of their networking structures. (participants who are not in Mother Centers are welcome to take part)
5 Thu.	10/06/10	Morning: Excursion to one or two Dutch Community groups (on location) Demand driven financing. How to finance grassroots work, the tension between wholistic approaches and specialised funding programs. Evening: Example of community budgeting. Free evening (opportunity for visit of spa, pool or health club)
6 Fri.	11/06/10	Morning: Tools and skills to face second stage organisational challenges. Do original concepts need to adapt and change, for up-scaling and mainstreaming? What leadership skills are needed for this transition? Introduction to the subject from NGO EU synergy, Netherlands followed by plenary debate Afternoon: Individual and small groups assignments. Reflection round. Evening: Presentation of working group results.
7 Sat.	12/06/10	Morning: Wrap-up and conclusions. Afternoon: Possibilities for further cooperation. Evaluative final plenary meeting. Evening: Festive end-gathering
8 sun.	13/06/10	Departure of participants. (Only participants from Belgium and the Netherlands may still be able to reach home after the workshop closure on Saturday)

All 20 participants will be asked to organise a meeting with their group to prepare for the workshop and define their learning objectives. All participants will be given a discussion guideline in their workshop kit (which will be send around well before the workshop) for this preparatory meeting. This allows the participants to prepare for the content of the workshop in their own time and speed and home environment. By involving their group in defining the learning objectives before the workshop is held, it is easier for the participants to prepare for the workshop and to share the outcome of the workshop afterwards. Sharing the learning with the group will allow a further dissemination of the results of the workshop. Sharing their learning with others, helps the participants to better digest the content. Each participant will receive a lump sum of €250,- for the organising costs of this preparatory meeting.

In addition, all costs of the workshop, as well as those for travel, accommodation and food are covered by the Nest! Foundation.

In return for this, the participants are required to participate actively and seriously in the workshop as well as its preparation and follow up. Those who cannot commit to this, should not take part.

Participants must meet the following requirements:

- Speak and understand English to the extent that they can take part in the workshop without translation. The workshop will be in English without translation
- They must be active in their Mother Center as well as in its network. In those countries where there are no networks of Mother Centers, the participants must be active in Mother Centers or building up similar community self help groups like Mother Centers.
- They must organise a meeting before and after the workshop with their own network or group
- They must formulate questions before, and what they have learned from the workshop afterwards
- They must be willing and able to give input during the workshop about their own experience