

BeActive Toolkit

Project BeActive, funded by Erasmus+

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-000083772



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PROJECT SUMMARY

The presented training materials have been developed as part of the 18-month project **BeActive - ACTIVE Youth for Green, Diversified and Digital Rural Communities**, financed by the Erasmus+ program of the EU, Contract number: 2022-1-BG01-KA210-YOU-000083772. For this, we, the project partners listed below, have shared and integrated our diversified experiences. That's how we created and approbated this **BeActive Toolkit** during and after the international youth training in Sicily in April 2023.

Our project has **three main objectives**:

1. To network transnationally, integrate cross-sectoral practices and enhance the competencies of 8 youth workers to address common rural communities' issues going beyond borders.
2. To build the competencies of 16 other youth volunteers to reach out to youth rural/remote communities, PROMOTE youth activism and CONNECT with local policymakers.
3. To motivate and EMPOWER 60 other youth to undertake 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM campaign events with 240 youth and local policy makers.

These campaigns will involve 240 young people and local institutions collaborating to address local issues within the framework of European Youth Goals, encompassing Sustainable Green Europe, Equality, and Inclusion.

The partners in the project are:

1. NGO 'Parallel-Silistra', Bulgaria - <https://paralel-silistra.net>
2. Association 'Bosco Angimbè', Italy -
3. Creativa Association, Spain - <https://asociacioncreativa.org>
4. European Institute "For Citizens", Portugal - <http://forcitizens.org>

Our associated partners include the relevant local authorities and institutions, other NGOs.

The project main activities include:

Training for experience sharing, 01.2023 - Through international on/offline networking & training for experience sharing, we shared & integrated our diverse expertise, and built our training capacity. Then we developed appealing tools, including the BeActive Toolkit to be used for the youth training and uploaded it on the project platform.

Youth training 'Quest in Sicily', 18-24.04.2023 - 16 young people from Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, accompanied by trainers from these countries, participated in our training program and enhanced their key competencies and skills for organizing youth activities. The training agenda featured exciting activities such as 'Digital Storytelling,' 'Survivor' in the

Angimbè Forest, 'Cultural Detectives' in Palermo, and 'The Incredible Journey of Plants' in the Botanical Garden of Sicily, one of Europe's largest.

Local campaigns 04.2023-02.2024 - After the training, the 16 trained youths, together with 60 other peers, have launched 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM national campaigns. The campaigns aim to engage 240 youth and institutions locally, and 200 supporters online, by inspiring them to address local challenges with a European perspective (such as Sustainable Green Europe, Equality and Inclusion, which are part of the European Youth Goals).

Digital stories- The campaign participants are telling their stories digitally, by publishing them on the project platform <https://paralel-silistra.net/active/>. We are disseminating these online narratives nationally and internationally via social media and direct communication with European organizations.

Results - Four civil society organizations will work in partnership to increase the competencies of 8 youth workers and 16 volunteers. The youth will reach and activate 60 other young people who will initiate local events and involve 400 participants in the 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM campaign. Participants will post their 8 digital stories, demonstrating responsibility towards nature and society and active civic behavior.

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Introduction

In the enchanting landscapes of Sicily, where sun-kissed mountains meet the azure Mediterranean Sea, a remarkable quest is about to unfold. In April 2023, three groups of participants travelled a long way from Bulgaria, the Canary Islands, Spain and Portugal to meet with their Italian counterparts and gather near in Calatafimi Segesta, Sicily, Italy. They were drawn together by a shared purpose: to learn how to make a change and create a better future for marginalized communities. Their destination, carefully chosen for its accessibility and proximity to nature, became the canvas upon which their transformative experiences unfolded.

This set of materials, the **BeActive Toolkit**, includes the **"Quest in Sicily" training scenarios** and **descriptions** of how the youth training was performed (**How we did it**). It invites the readers to join a group of passionate and determined youth workers who share their training practices and experience gained through an inspiring journey of learning, collaboration, and positive impact on rural and remote communities.

Under the project titled "BeActive", the participants embarked on a profound adventure with three key objectives in mind:

1. Creating a Transnational Network: United by a shared vision, the diverse group of youth workers, volunteers and their trainers aspire to forge a transnational network of like-minded individuals and organizations. As they immerse themselves in interactive icebreakers and team-building activities led by the Spanish and Bulgarian partners, they discover the power of cooperation and mutual understanding. Cultivating relationships and sharing cross-sectoral practices, the participants form a tight-knit training group ready to collaborate and address the challenges of the training and their future activities.

2. Fostering Environmental Awareness: The picturesque journey through Sicily's rich natural habitats and cultural heritage sparks environmental consciousness. At the Zingaro Reserve and Palermo Botanical Garden, the participants embark on "The Incredible Journey of Plants," unravelling the web of biodiversity, sustainability, and cultural values through Stefano Mancuso's enlightening stories shared by the Italian trainers. These experiences ignite a spark of environmental awareness that fuels their determination to protect and preserve the planet.

3. Empowering Young EU Citizens: A vital aspect of the quest involves empowering the youth to become active and engaged EU citizens. Guided by experienced trainers from Spain and Portugal, the participants simulated a city council session, wrestling with technology, agriculture, and renewable energy challenges to create environmentally-friendly city policies. Armed with newfound knowledge and a sense of purpose, they delve into the "16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM," learning how to organize impactful local campaigns that advocate green youth participation at the national level. Through these efforts, they seek to foster a sense of responsibility, agency, and leadership among the younger generation, encouraging them to take an active role in shaping the future of their communities and the EU at large. Later they plan their national actions that capitalize on their collective strength and shared vision.

The training methodology includes the approach of 'Experiential Learning: Embracing Nature': One of the journey's highlights is the experiential learning activity in the Zingaro

Reserve and Angimbè Forest. As nature detectives, the participants venture into the heart of the forest, immersing themselves in the wonders of the natural world. With the guidance of the Italian and Bulgarian partners, they embark on a unique journey of discovery, learning about the flora and fauna that inhabit this captivating ecosystem.

The participants forge a deep connection with nature through engaging tasks, such as finding information about trees and plants, capturing amusing photos, putting up tents, and building a campfire to spend the night in the forest. They develop a profound understanding of the delicate balance between biodiversity and sustainability.

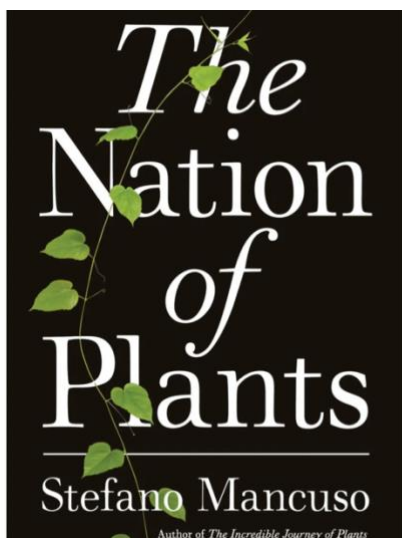
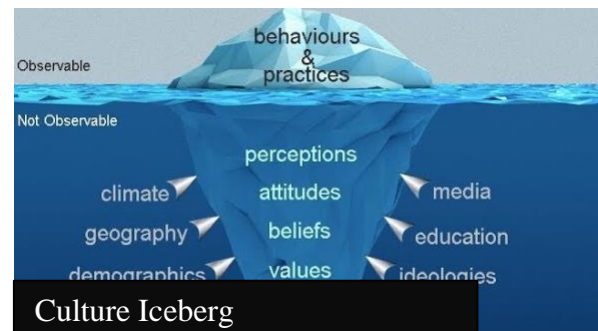
The experiential learning activity in the Angimbè Forest and the overnight spent there leave a lasting impression on the participants, sparking a profound sense of responsibility to protect and conserve nature. It becomes a symbol of their commitment to fostering environmental stewardship in their communities and beyond.

The BeActive Toolkit concludes with assessment on the impact on the participants and their newfound determination to lead and inspire change. Departing from Sicily, they carry the seeds of hope and possibility, ready to sow the spirit of empowerment in their communities and beyond.

It is not just a training program; it is a transformative journey—a testament to the potential of young people to drive sustainable change, create a transnational network of advocates, and make a lasting impact on the environment and society.

CHAPTER 1 - Pre-training reading material

Main topics



SICILY'S GEOGRAPHY

Sicily is an island located in the Mediterranean Sea, southeast of the Italian mainland. It is the largest island in the Mediterranean and is part of Italy.

1. Location: Sicily is between Italy's western coast and Africa's northern coast. It is separated from the mainland by the Strait of Messina.

2. Size: The island has an area of approximately 25,711 square kilometres (9,926 square miles), making it the largest island in the Mediterranean.

3. Climate: Sicily has a Mediterranean climate, with hot summers and mild winters. The island is also prone to occasional droughts and forest fires.

4. Terrain: The local landscape is characterized by rolling hills and mountainous regions, with several active and dormant volcanic areas. The island is also home to several coastal plains and sandy beaches.

5. Natural resources: Sicily is rich in natural resources, including fertile agricultural lands, minerals such as sulfur, and abundant fishing grounds.

6. Biodiversity: The island is known for its unique and diverse flora and fauna, with many species found only on the island. It has several protected areas, including the Madonie Regional Natural Park and the Zingaro Natural Reserve.

7. Major cities: Sicily's most significant cities include the capital city of Palermo, Messina, Catania, and Syracuse.

BOSCO ANGIMBÈ

The Angimbè Forest, known in Italian as the Bosco Angimbè, is a unique conservation area in the province of Trapani in Sicily, Italy. Here are some key facts about it:

1. Location: It is located in the northwest part of Sicily and covers an area of approximately 213 hectares.

2. Biodiversity: The Angimbè Forest is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including many species of plants and animals that are unique to West Sicily. The site is known for its ancient cork oak trees, Mediterranean maquis, and diverse birdlife.

3. Geological significance: The forest is on the west side of Trapani Province. It spreads over a hilly terrain, with elevations between 200 and 365 m above sea level, with prevailing southeast and northwest exposure. From the highest observation points, it is possible to observe several mountain complexes that constitute the geological complex of the Trapani Mountains (Monte Sparagio, Monte Bonifato, Rocca Busambra, etc.).

4. Cultural heritage: The entire western area of Sicily is rich in cultural heritage, dating back to ancient times. The area of Calatafimi Segesta is home to the Segesta Archaeological Park

from the Elymian period. The Elymians were an ancient tribal people during the Bronze Age and Classical Antiquity. The province of Trapani is also home to the most extensive archaeological park in Europe: the Selinunte Archaeological Park. Furthermore, the entire western area is home to exciting sites from different historical periods, such as Mozia (from the Phoenician period), Erice's ancient medieval village, and secondary prehistoric sites in Partanna.

5. **Recreational activities:** The Angimbè Forest is a protected area that is a popular destination for outdoor recreation, with many opportunities for hiking, birdwatching, and other nature-based activities. Visitors can explore the area with many trails, picnic areas, and scenic overlooks .

KEY FACTS ABOUT SICILY'S CULTURE AND HISTORY

Nowhere better represents the meeting of cultures than the island of Sicily. It has always been at the crossroads of East and West. Cut off by the sea, the island has been invaded, colonised and loved by countless populations, resulting in a unique cultural mix of extraordinary richness.

In Sicily – everything is culture – and art. There are works of antiquity, such as the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, and works of nature, such as Mount Etna and Scala dei Turchi, meaning Turkish Stairs, near Realmonte.

1. Ancient History: Sicily has a long history dating back to the ancient civilizations of the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans. The island was also ruled by the Byzantines, Arabs, and Normans, who each left their mark on its culture, architecture, and language.

2. Middle Ages: During the Middle Ages, Sicily was ruled by a series of feudal lords and was a significant center of trade and commerce. The island was also the birthplace of the Mafia, a secret society that played a significant role in Sicilian society and politics.

3. Spanish rule: In the 16th century, the Spanish Habsburgs ruled the island and introduced various reforms. They established the city of Palermo as the capital of the Kingdom of Sicily.

4. Unification of Italy: In the 19th century, Sicily became part of the newly formed Kingdom of Italy, following the Risorgimento and the country's unification.

5. 20th Century: In the 20th century, Sicily was marked by social and economic turmoil, with high poverty levels, unemployment, and organized crime. The island was also a key battleground during World War II, with the Allies landing in 1943 to begin the liberation of Italy.

6. Modern era: In recent decades, Sicily has made significant progress in economic development and social stability, with the island now known for its rich cultural heritage, stunning natural beauty, and delicious cuisine.

CULTURE AS A SOFTWARE OF THE MIND

"Culture is like a "software of the mind" that provides a set of mental programs or frameworks for interpreting and responding to the world."

Geert Hofstede

The Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede's work on culture and the "software of the mind" provides a robust framework for understanding how cultural differences shape people's thinking, feeling, and acting.

The Cultural Iceberg concept, introduced by Geert Hofstede, is a powerful analogy used to understand cultural differences. Much like an iceberg, which has a small visible portion above the waterline and a much larger hidden portion beneath the surface, cultures have visible and hidden aspects. The visible aspects are the surface-level behaviors, customs, and artifacts that we can easily observe and experience when interacting with people from different cultures. These may include clothing, language, food, greetings, and other observable behaviors.

However, beneath the surface, there are deeper and less visible aspects of culture that significantly shape people's beliefs, values, and assumptions. These aspects are not immediately apparent during brief interactions, but they profoundly influence the way people think, communicate, and behave.

The hidden aspects of culture include values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, communication styles, perceptions of time, and concepts of space, among others. Hofstede's Cultural Iceberg model suggests that to truly understand and navigate cultural differences, we need to explore the hidden aspects that lie beneath the surface.

While surface-level behaviors are relatively easy to adapt or imitate, it is the deeper cultural elements that shape the core identity of a society or group and drive their behaviors on a fundamental level. By recognizing the existence of this cultural depth, individuals can develop cultural sensitivity and understanding.

This understanding enables more effective communication and collaboration with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, as it helps to avoid misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and conflicts that may arise due to differences in values and beliefs.

CULTURAL IMPACT

Here are some of the ways in which the history and cultural diversity of Sicily continue to influence life on the island:

1. **Architecture:** Sicily's long and diverse history is reflected in its unique architectural heritage, with buildings and monuments from a variety of historical periods and cultural traditions. From ancient Greek temples and Roman amphitheaters to Norman castles and Baroque palaces, the island's architectural heritage is a testament to its rich history.
2. **Language:** Sicily has a unique dialect that reflects its diverse cultural heritage, with influences from Greek, Latin, Arab, and Norman languages. The dialect is still widely spoken on the island.
3. **Cuisine:** Sicily is known for its delicious cuisine, which reflects the island's diverse cultural heritage and history. From Arab-inspired sweets and spiced dishes to Norman-style seafood dishes and traditional Italian pasta, Sicilian cuisine is a fusion of flavors and traditions.
4. **Religion:** Sicily has a long history of religious diversity, with a range of religious traditions and communities represented on the island, including Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. This religious diversity is reflected in the island's many religious monuments and festivals, which are an important part of Sicilian culture.
5. **Arts and Literature:** Sicily has a rich cultural heritage, with a long tradition of arts and literature that reflects the island's history and diverse cultural traditions. From ancient Greek plays and epic poetry to modern-day works of fiction, Sicily has produced many great works of art and literature that continue to inspire and captivate people today.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Cultural differences refer to the distinct beliefs, behaviours, customs, practices, and social norms that characterize a particular group or society. These differences can include attitudes towards education, religion, social roles, family structure, language, and many other aspects of daily life. Cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts but can also be a source of diversity and richness in a community.

There are many cultural differences among Bulgarians, Italians, Spaniards, and Portuguese, including language, history, religion, family values, cuisine, and social customs.

For example:

- **Language:** Bulgarian is a Slavic language, while Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese are Romance languages.
- **History:** Bulgaria has a long and rich history, with influences from the Ottoman Empire, while Italy has a diverse history with ancient Roman roots and a strong Renaissance

heritage. Spain has a history marked by the Moors and the Catholic Church, and Portugal has a history marked by maritime exploration and colonization.

- **Religion:** Bulgaria is predominantly Orthodox Christian, while Italy, Spain and Portugal are predominantly Catholic.

- **Family values:** Family is highly valued in all four countries, but the family structure and gender roles can vary.

- **Cuisine:** Bulgarian cuisine is characterized by dishes such as banitsa, moussaka, and kavarma, while Italian cuisine is known for dishes such as pizza and pasta; Spanish cuisine is known for tapas and paella; and Portuguese cuisine is known for dishes such as bacalhau and port wine.

- **Social customs:** Each country has its unique social traditions, such as the siesta in Spain, the passeggiata in Italy, the love of Fado music in Portugal, and the ritual of coffee drinking in Bulgaria.

Here are some examples of cultural differences in the perceptions of Bulgarians, Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese:

- **Time perception:** Bulgarians tend to have a more laid-back attitude towards time, quite similar to Italians. In Spain and Portugal, punctuality may vary depending on the situation, with a more relaxed attitude towards time in social settings.

- **Personal space:** Bulgarians and Italians tend to have a more relaxed attitude towards personal space, while Spanish and Portuguese people tend to value their personal space more and may feel uncomfortable with close physical contact.

- **Communication style:** Bulgarian communication can be direct, without excessive body language, while Italians are known for their expressive gestures and nonverbal cues. Spanish people are known for their animated and passionate way of speaking, while Portuguese communication can be more reserved and polite.

- **Social norms:** In Bulgaria, it is common to address elders with respect, while in Italy, it is customary to kiss both cheeks when greeting someone. In Spain and Portugal, it is common to take a siesta in the afternoon, while in Bulgaria this is less common.

- **Attitude towards work:** Bulgarian people tend to value hard work and taking responsibility, while Italians tend to have a more relaxed attitude towards work-life balance. In Spain and Portugal, there may be a stronger emphasis on socializing and taking time to enjoy life.

These are just a few examples and are not meant to be taken as generalizations or stereotypes. There can be great variations within each country and among different people.

PLANTS AND STEFANO MANCUSO

The secret life of plants: how they memorise, communicate, problem solve and socialise

Stefano Mancuso studies what was once considered laughable – the intelligence and behaviour of plants. His work is contentious, he says, because it calls into question the superiority of humans.

“The first thing is that you don’t have to look at plant as if they were animals. That's the problem. We all look at plants as if they are animals, handicapped animals. Let's say, animals without something. It's a big problem.

If you change your vision about plants, your point of view, everything appears clearly, very clearly. Plants cannot use the main ability of animals, that is to run away. We animals, our name, ‘animals,’ derives from this fact that we are moving. We are animate. We solve all our problems by movement. In the case of plants this is not possible. Plants, they need to solve problems in other ways.”

But they can memorise, communicate, solve problems and socialize just like humans. That's why we should see them as equals, they also have rights that we should respect.

Stefano Mancuso, <https://www.theguardian.com>

EXCERPTED FROM [THE NATION OF PLANTS](#) BY STEFANO MANCUSO

But no other natural disaster provoked by humans following rash decisions based on inadequate knowledge of natural relationships will ever be able to rival what Mao Tse-Tung accomplished in the late 1950s. Between 1958 and 1962, the Chinese Communist Party led an economic and social movement in the whole country that came to be known as the Great Leap Forward. This was an enormous collective endeavor meant to transform China in just a few years from an agricultural nation into a great industrial power. The movement’s results, unfortunately, fell dramatically short of what had been hoped. The reforms through which the party intended to effect this radical national change involved every area of Chinese life, and some of them had devastating effects for the country.

In 1958, Mao was rightly convinced that some of the scourges that had plagued the Chinese for centuries had to be eradicated immediately and in a radical fashion. Keep in mind that when the Communists took power in the autumn of 1949, they found themselves governing a nation gravely distressed by a soaring incidence of infectious diseases: plague, cholera, measles, tuberculosis, polio, and malaria were endemic in most of the country. Cholera epidemics were very frequent, and the infant mortality rate ran as high as 30 percent.¹⁰

The creation of a national health service and a massive vaccination campaign against plague and measles were the first, meritorious, actions undertaken to improve the situation. Water purification and sewage treatment infrastructure was installed throughout the country, and imitating what had been done previously in the Soviet Union, health care personnel were

trained and sent into rural areas to serve as proper health care administrators, educating the population in basic health and hygiene practices and treating diseases with all available resources. But, obviously this wasn't enough; the diffusion of carriers that spread disease had to be curtailed: mosquitoes, responsible for malaria; rats, spreaders of plague; and, finally, flies had to be exterminated. These three scourges from which China had to be liberated were soon joined by a fourth: sparrows, which by eating fruit and rice cultivated laboriously in the fields were one of the most terrible enemies of the people. Chinese scientists had calculated that each sparrow ate ten pounds of grain per year. So for every million sparrows killed, food for 60,000 people would be saved.

This information was the basis for the "Four Pests Campaign," and sparrows were public enemy number one. Today, any proposal for ecosystem modification as radical as this call to eliminate four species from a territory as vast as China would, obviously, be considered ill-considered. But in 1958, lots of people thought it seemed like a good idea. So the party's campaign to recruit the citizenry to combat these four pests was begun. Millions of posters were printed up illustrating the necessary eradication and the means to implement it.

Chinese scientists had calculated that each sparrow ate ten pounds of grain per year. So for every million sparrows killed, food for 60,000 people would be saved.

For the battle against sparrows, the people were told to give no quarter and to use all available means. One of the directives was to frighten the sparrows with noise, produced in any way possible, so they would be forced to fly constantly without ever coming to rest, until they fell to the ground exhausted. Pans, casseroles, gongs, rifles, trumpets, horns, plates, tambourines—any source of noise was put to use.

The government acclaimed the schools, working groups, and governmental agencies that achieved the best results in terms of number of pests killed. The estimates provided by the Chinese government, totally unreliable for their enormity, indicated a billion and a half rats and a billion sparrows killed. Even though they are enormously exaggerated, these figures nevertheless tell us of a massacre whose dramatic consequences would soon be evident. Sparrows, in fact, do not feed exclusively on hulled grains. On the contrary, their main food supply are insects.

In 1959, Mao, realizing his mistake, replaced the sparrows as a target pest with beetles, but the damage had already been done. The almost total lack in China not only of sparrows (which had to be reintroduced from the USSR) but of practically all other birds led to an immeasurable increase in the insect population. The number of locusts began to increase exponentially, and immense swarms of insects making their way through the fields of China destroyed most of the crops. From 1959 to 1961, a series of ill-starred events partially related to natural disasters and partly caused by the mistaken reforms of the Great Leap Forward (the idea to exterminate the sparrows being one of the worst), led to three years of famine so harsh that it caused the deaths of an estimated 20 to 40 million people.

Excerpted from [The Nation of Plants](#) by Stefano Mancuso, translated by Gregory Conti

THE BILL OF RIGHTS OF THE NATION OF PLANTS

art.1 THE EARTH SHALL BE THE COMMON HOME OF LIFE. SOVEREIGNTY SHALL PERTAIN TO EVERY LIVING BEING.

art.2 THE NATION OF PLANTS SHALL RECOGNISE AND PROTECT THE INVIOABLE RIGHTS OF NATURAL COMMUNITIES AS SOCIETIES BASED ON THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE ORGANISMS THAT COMPOSE THEM.

art.3 THE NATION OF PLANTS SHALL NOT RECOGNISE ANIMAL HIERARCHIES, FOUNDED ON COMMAND CENTRES AND CENTRALISED FUNCTIONS, AND SHALL FOSTER DIFFUSE AND DECENTRALISED VEGETABLE DEMOCRACIES.

art.4 THE NATION OF PLANTS SHALL UNIVERSALLY RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF THE CURRENTLY LIVING AND THOSE OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

art.5 THE NATION OF PLANTS SHALL GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO CLEAN WATER, SOIL AND ATMOSPHERE.

art.6 THE CONSUMPTION OF ANY RESOURCE NON-RECONSTITUTABLE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF LIVING BEINGS SHALL BE PROHIBITED.

art.7 THE NATION OF PLANTS SHALL NOT HAVE BORDERS. EVERY LIVING BEING SHALL BE FREE TO TRAVEL, MOVE AND LIVE THERE WITHOUT LIMITATION.

art.8 THE NATION OF PLANTS SHALL RECOGNISE AND FOSTER MUTUAL AID AMONG NATURAL COMMUNITIES OF LIVING BEINGS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF COEXISTENCE AND PROGRESS.

Stefano Mancuso, from the book 'The Nation of Plants'

CHAPTER 2 -Embracing Diversity

Main topics

Cultural awareness
Communication competence
Language competence
Personal, social and learning-to-learn competence



Icebreakers and interactive intercultural games



Team-building activities

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

Icebreaker: Human Bingo - Likes and Dislikes Edition

Objective: The Human Bingo icebreaker, without cards, encourages participants to interact, find common ground, and learn about each other's likes and dislikes. The activity is highly suitable for English as a second language (ESL) participants because, on the one hand, it refreshes their knowledge of specific grammatical topics. On the other, it lifts up barriers to speaking. By focusing on personal statements, participants engage in meaningful conversations that set the stage for building positive relationships throughout the program.

1.Preparation: Prepare a list of exemplary statements that participants can use to identify common likes and dislikes. Each statement should begin with "I like" or "I dislike", followed by a specific activity, food, hobby, or topic. Ensure that the statements cover a diverse range of interests.

Examples: *I like hiking in the mountains; I'm not too fond of spicy food; I dislike horror movies; I love reading fantasy books; I truly hate waking up early.*

2.Forming Pairs or Small Groups: Divide the participants into pairs or small groups, depending on the total number of participants.

3.Sharing Likes and Dislikes: Instruct each participant to take turns sharing two things they like and two things they dislike from the prepared list.

4.Finding Common Ground: Encourage participants to actively listen to each other and identify any shared likes or dislikes they may have. When they discover a common interest, they can verbally acknowledge it.

5.Switching Partners or Groups: After a few minutes of sharing and finding common ground, ask participants to change partners or groups to repeat the process with new people.

Full Group Discussion:

- Gather the participants back together after the activity. Initiate a group discussion where participants can share common likes and dislikes they discovered during the icebreaker.
- Emphasize the importance of finding common ground and building connections based on shared interests.

Facilitating Interaction: This icebreaker promotes interaction and conversation between participants, allowing them to engage with others in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.

Building Connections: By discovering shared likes and dislikes, participants can quickly build connections and find common ground with others in the group. The activity fosters an inclusive environment by encouraging participants to listen and appreciate each other's preferences and interests.

Icebreaker: Shared Stories (Continuation)

This activity encourages participants to strengthen the bonds established by the previous icebreaker. At the same time, it comes naturally for young people to continue personal chats. The shared stories can be on any topic.

1. **Introduction to Shared Stories Circle:** Gather the participants in a circle and explain that this icebreaker aims to deepen their connections by sharing personal stories about a common theme. The theme could be broad, such as "Memorable Adventures" or "Bitter Travelling Experiences".
2. **Facilitator Example:** As the facilitator, start by sharing your personal story related to the chosen theme. For example, if the theme is "Acts of Kindness," you might share a story about how a stranger's kindness touched your heart during a challenging time.
3. **Pass the Story:** Begin the activity by selecting one participant to share their story related to the chosen theme. After they finish sharing, they can select the next participant to go, and so on. Such a set creates a chain of shared stories that travel around the circle.
4. **Creating a Safe Space:** Emphasize that the sharing should be voluntary, and participants should only share what they are comfortable with. Encourage active listening and respect for each person's story.
5. **Language Support:** For ESL participants, offer language support and encourage others to provide translations or clarifications.
6. **Reflecting on Stories:** After everyone has had the chance to share their stories, take a moment for reflection. Ask the group how the activity made them feel, what they learned about each other, and whether they discovered everyday experiences or emotions.

Benefits:

- **Deepening Connections:** "Shared Stories Circle" fosters deeper connections among participants as they open up and share personal experiences.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Hearing each other's stories promotes compassion and understanding, allowing participants to see different perspectives and life experiences.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Participants' stories may reflect cultural nuances and unique experiences, contributing to a rich cultural exchange within the group.

HOW WE DID IT

On April 18, in the late afternoon, a diverse group of 16 youth workers, volunteers, and trainers arrived in the enchanting town of Calatafimi Segesta, Sicily. Eager to embark on their transformative journey, they gathered in the small hotel conference hall to get introduced to one another. The participants from Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, and Italy filled the room with excitement and anticipation even though they had travelled a lot and experienced flight delays.

The partners Jorge Rivera and Noor Harjani Daswani from Creativa Association, Spain, known for their enthusiasm and creativity, initiated the introductions. They knew the importance of forming a solid bond among participants from different backgrounds and nationalities. With this in mind, they prepared a couple of engaging exercises to unite the group.

The first exercise was a variation of the classic Human Bingo, ideally suited for this multicultural setting. The Spanish partners explained the rules in a mix of English and their native language, ensuring that everyone understood. They had prepared a list of statements that described various likes and dislikes, hobbies, and interests. Each participant received a grid with these statements.

As the exercise began, the participants mingled around the conference hall, introducing themselves to each other. Based on the statements provided, they sought to find others who shared similar interests. Laughter and conversation filled the room as the young people discovered shared hobbies, favourite foods, and passions. The Spanish partners played an active role, helping ESL participants understand the statements and facilitating communication between the different nationalities.

As the interactions continued, the initial barriers between the participants began to dissolve. Cultural exchange and understanding blossomed as they discussed their unique backgrounds and experiences related to their likes and dislikes. The forest of Angimbè became a place of unity, where the diverse group found common ground and built connections that would last beyond the journey.

By the end of the Human Bingo exercise, the participants had formed a tight-knit community, ready to take on the challenges and adventures that awaited them in Sicily. The Spanish partners' engaging icebreaker had set the tone for the rest of the journey, fostering a sense of camaraderie and friendship that would enrich the days to come. As the sun set over the picturesque landscapes of Sicily, the young people embraced the spirit of togetherness, united by the shared experience in the enchanting forest of Angimbè.

CHAPTER 3 – Connecting with Nature

Main topics

Communication competence
Basic competences in science
Digital competence
Learning to learn
Social and civic competence



Mancuso's concepts
Discussion on the 'Nation of Plants'
excerpts
Exploration assignments

**„THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY OF
PLANTS“ IN THE PALERMO
BOTANICAL GARDEN**

'THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY OF PLANTS' IN THE BOTANICAL GARDEN OF SICILY

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

1. **Introduction:** To begin the session, gather all trainees at a central location in the botanical garden. Provide an overview of the session's goals and objectives. Explain that the aim is to learn about the incredible journey of plants and understand their vital role in maintaining the planet's health. Introduce the work of Stefano Mancuso, a leading expert on plant intelligence and the founder of the field of plant neurobiology.
2. **Warm-up:** Engage the trainees in a warm-up activity, such as a plant identification challenge. Ask them to find different plants in the garden and note their observations. Ask them questions about the origin of the plants, where they came from, how they got across the sea from the main continent.
3. **Guided tour:** Lead a guided tour of the Palermo Botanical Garden, pointing out key features of the different plants and highlighting the diversity of plant species. Emphasize the essential role plants play in maintaining the planet's health and the benefits they provide. Emphasize Stefano Mancuso's ideas that plants are intelligent beings capable of communication and problem-solving. Tell some of his stories about the journeys of plants.
4. **Discussion on plants' life-cycle:** During the tour, pause at different points to discuss the various stages of a plant's life cycle, including seed germination, growth, reproduction, and death. Highlight the importance of plants in maintaining ecosystems' balance and supporting the food chain. Use examples from the Palermo Botanical Garden to illustrate the balanced ecosystem.
5. **Mancuso's theories:** After the guided tour, gather the trainees together and introduce some fundamental concepts from Stefano Mancuso's work. Engage the participants in a discussion about the idea that plants are intelligent beings with complex communication systems, capable of sensing and responding to their environment. Encourage active discussion on the intelligence and capabilities of plants and their role in maintaining the planet's health. Refer to the "Plant Nation Bill of Rights" (included above).
6. **Action planning:** Encourage the trainees to brainstorm and develop ideas for initiating their local campaigns when launching the 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM campaign for protecting the environment. Stimulate their thinking about what they can do, both individually and collectively, to help preserve the environment in their local surroundings.
7. **Closing:** Conclude the session by reflecting on what the trainees have learned and reminding them of the importance of environmental awareness. Provide them with materials, such as brochures or posters, to continue spreading the message about protecting the environment. Encourage further exploration of Stefano Mancuso's work and the critical role of plants in maintaining the planet's health.

HOW WE DID IT

On April 19th, in the beautiful Palermo Botanical Garden, a diverse group of enthusiastic trainees from different parts of the world gathered for a transformative journey. Guided by trainers Francesco Adragna and Valentina Caradonna from the Association 'Bosco Angimbè', Italy, they were about to explore the fascinating world of plants.

The Palermo Botanical Garden, nestled in Sicily, is a captivating haven of greenery and biodiversity. Covering acres of land, it boasts an impressive collection of over 12,000 plant species from around the globe, drawing plant lovers, conservationists, and curious minds seeking to deepen their understanding of nature.

Led by the knowledgeable Italian trainer, the group embarked on a guided tour through the garden's wonders. Each step unveiled a new chapter of the captivating plant kingdom. From towering ancient trees to delicate blossoms, each plant held a unique tale of survival and adaptation. The Italian trainer expertly pointed out key features of different plant species, sharing intriguing anecdotes about their ecological significance. From towering sequoias to delicate orchids, each plant played a vital role in maintaining the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

Amidst this enchanting setting, an awe-inspiring figure stood tall, the "Ficus of the Unification of Italy." Introduced in 1845, it was the progenitor of the great Italian Ficus trees. With a remarkable ability to develop both vertically and horizontally, it displayed an intricate network of stems and aerial roots, creating a mesmerizing sight.

The Ficus of the Unification of Italy is a living marvel, showcasing as many as 44 secondary stems, some with a circumference of over 3 meters, supporting 11 majestic branches. Proudly belonging to the species "Moreton Bay Fig," this tree had witnessed 173 years of history, standing as a testament to resilience and longevity. Recognized for its magnificence, it had also garnered significant admiration in a national contest organized by the Giant Trees Foundation, securing an impressive fourth place with a staggering 10,663 votes. Therefore, the whole group spent enough time around the 'Tree of 2023' to listen to its story and take memorable photos.

Throughout the journey, Stefano Mancuso's groundbreaking work served as a guiding light. The Italian trainer skillfully wove Mancuso's theories into the discussions, captivating the trainees with the concept of plant intelligence and communication. They felt a newfound respect and wonder for the intricate world of plants.

Gathered in a circle, the trainees engaged in a lively discussion, sharing their thoughts and reflections. Empowered by their newfound knowledge, they generated various ideas for their local campaigns to launch the 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM initiative for environmental protection.

CHAPTER 4 – Unraveling Palermo's Heritage

Main topic

CULTURE DETECTIVES



Exploration assignment – Palace of Normans



Encouraging intercultural communication



Exploration assignment – Cathedral of Palermo



Boosting intercultural competence

‘CULTURE DETECTIVES’

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

1. Objective: Trainees will explore different cultures, learn about cultural diversity, and appreciate the similarities and differences among cultures. Materials: Markers, pens, cameras or smart phones; Handouts with cultural facts and questions; A tourist map of Palermo

2. Introduction (10 minutes): Begin by asking trainees what they know about the different cultures in Sicily, specifically in Palermo. Refer to the Culture part of the Chapter 1 Pre-training Reading Material. Share some facts and statistics about cultural diversity and the importance of understanding different cultures. Explain that today's session will focus on becoming a Culture Detective and exploring the cultures, presented in Palermo.

3. Understanding Cultural Diversity (15 minutes): Show images or videos to explain the Cultural Iceberg (by Hofstede). Refer to the Culture part of the Chapter 1 Pre-training Reading Material. Ask the participants when exploring their tasks from the handouts to think about the cultural layers, our perceptions and hidden values. Lead a short discussion on potential similarities and differences among the cultures. Divide the participants in two groups. Hand out the Handouts with cultural facts and questions. Ask the groups to read the facts and discuss the questions on their own before the game begins

4. Cultural Exploration: At this stage, participants are already familiar with the general history and cultural layers of Palermo and are ready to explore the two cultural-historical sites described below.

- *The Cathedral of Palermo:* The participants from the first group have the task to visit the cathedral, learn about its unique architectural style, history, and significance and answer the questions from their Handout 1. They could take a guided tour, complete a scavenger hunt, or complete other interactive activities to learn about the cathedral's history and significance.
- *Palazzo dei Normanni:* The participants from the second group would then visit the Palazzo dei Normanni, learning about its history and significance as the former residence of the Norman kings of Sicily. They could take a guided tour, interview someone or do internet research to learn about the palace's history and significance. Most importantly, they have to be able to answer the questions from Handout 2.

5. Wrap-up: Participants would then reconvene to share their experiences and what they learned about the cultural heritage of Palermo and Sicily.

6. Assessment: Assess trainees' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity through group discussions and written assignments.

HOW WE DID IT

The preparation for the first session started by asking the students to discuss the Cultural Iceberg concept by Hofstede, part of the Chapter 1 Pre-training Reading Material. As the participants had already got introduced to the idea, the trainers Diana Bebenova-Nikolova and Lydia Svetoslavova from NGO 'Parallel-Silistra', Bulgaria encouraged them to delve into the cultural layers, perceptions, and hidden values while exploring their tasks from the handouts. Through the discussion, they suggested some potential similarities and differences among the cultures presented in the group (Bulgarian, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese).

Then our group of trainees gathered in Palermo for the special session to explore different cultures, embrace diversity, and appreciate each culture's unique characteristics. The session commenced with a ten-minute introduction where the trainees shared their knowledge about Sicily's diverse cultures, particularly in Palermo (part of the Chapter 1 Pre-training Reading Material). The Bulgarian trainer Diana Bebenova-Nikolova and the Italian volunteers from the University of Palermo presented fascinating facts and statistics about cultural diversity, emphasizing the importance of understanding and respecting different cultures.

Equipped with markers, pens, cameras, and handouts with cultural facts and questions (provided in the set), they were ready to become Culture Detectives. The trainees were divided into two groups and handed the handouts containing cultural facts and questions. Before beginning the interactive game, each group independently read the facts and discussed the task assignments.

The first group visited the unique cathedral of Palermo, marveling at its architectural style and elements. The guided tour and interactive handout activities allowed them to immerse themselves in the site's fascinating past. Young people often used the Internet to find answers to individual questions about which their Italian counterparts had no information. Thus, in a natural way, they exchanged knowledge and developed competences for lifelong-learning.

The journey took the second group to the famous Palazzo Normandi, one of the most beautiful castles in Italy with its remarkable Norman architecture. They delved into the history of the palace, looking for answers to the questions posed and exploring the accumulated cultural layers. After an eventful day of cultural exploration, the participants reconvened to share their experiences and discoveries. During this session, the trainers assessed the trainees' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity through lively discussions and written assignments.

As the sun set on this enlightening day, the trainees returned home, enriched by their experiences as Culture Detectives, embracing the beauty of cultural diversity and cherishing the similarities and differences that make each culture unique.

HANDOUT FOR THE FIRST GROUP

The Cathedral of Palermo

The Cathedral of Palermo, also known as the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Admiral, has a rich and complex history that spans thousands of years. By using the approach of "deep history," we can trace its origins and evolution and gain a deeper understanding of its significance.

TASK DESCRIPTION

Task 1

Explore the Cathedral, consult with the tourist guide or research the internet to answer the following questions:

1. What was the first building constructed on that site in the 7th century BC?
2. Who invaded Sicily after the fall of Carthage in the Second Punic War? What did the new invaders do with the site later?
3. What building was built on the site during the Arab Occupation? What century was that? Are there any architectural elements that tell about this past period?
4. What was the descent of the Normans who conquered Palermo in 1072? Where did they come from? What did they build on the site? Are there any architectural elements that tell about this past period?
5. What are the architectural elements that come from the Gothic Period (13th-14th centuries), the Renaissance Period (15th-16th centuries) and the Baroque Period (17th-18th centuries)? Find out and explain at least two elements from each period.

Task 2

Take photos/short videos of the researched architectural elements and prepare a digital story on the topic. Explain how this cultural site has impacted the life in Sicily.

Optional Task 3

Name similar cathedrals in Bulgaria, Spain and Portugal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Task 1

1. History of the building: The Cathedral of Palermo stands as a remarkable testament to the rich and complex history of Sicily. Over the centuries, it underwent multiple transformations, reflecting the cultural shifts and conquests that shaped the region.

The site where the cathedral now stands once housed a temple dedicated to the Phoenician goddess Tanit, dating back to the 7th century BCE.

During the Roman era, after the fall of Carthage in the 2nd century BC, the temple was converted into a church dedicated to Saint Mary, serving the Roman community in Palermo. Later, during the Arab occupation in the 9th century, it became a mosque, witnessing over two centuries of Arab worship.

The Norman conquest in 1072 led to the cathedral's conversion back into a Christian place of worship, dedicated to Saint Mary once more, serving as the royal chapel for the Norman kings. In the 12th century, the ambitious Norman King William II decided to erect a grand cathedral on the site to honor Saint Mary and showcase Norman power. The Cathedral of Palermo emerged in a unique blend of Norman, Arab, and Byzantine architectural styles, becoming the royal cathedral for centuries to come.

2. Architectural elements: The architectural elements from different periods paint a stunning picture of its history. The Norman period brings forth a fusion of Romanesque and Byzantine styles, evident in the strong lines, rounded arches, and decorative mosaic cloisters. The Gothic period adds pointed arches, stained glass windows, and ribbed vaults, exuding grandeur and intricate ornamentation. The Renaissance period introduces ornate chapels, altarpieces, and classical motifs, emphasizing harmony and balance. The Baroque period contributes elaborate stucco work, frescoes, and dramatic lighting, creating a captivating theatrical ambiance.

The cathedral also bears striking Arab architectural elements. The muqarnas, decorative elements with small stacked cells, grace the dome over the crossing and cupola over the transept. Arabic inscriptions adorn the marble inlays and stucco work, reminiscent of its mosque days. The stucco decoration, a hallmark of Islamic architecture, creates intricate geometric patterns and Arabic script, adding a rich, decorative texture to the walls and ceilings.

Byzantine architectural influence shines through with the prominent dome symbolizing heaven, mosaic decorations, pointed arches, and vaulted ceilings, imparting spaciousness and grandeur.

Task 2

The Cathedral of Palermo has had a significant impact on the cultural and religious life of Sicily over the centuries. Here are some ways in which it has influenced the region:

1. **Religious Significance:** As a religious site, the cathedral has been an important place of worship for the people of Palermo and has played a role in shaping their religious beliefs and practices. Over the years, it has been a place for religious ceremonies and celebrations, as well as a site for pilgrimage and reflection.
2. **Historical Legacy:** The cathedral is a tangible symbol of the city's rich history and serves as a reminder of the various cultures and civilizations that have shaped Sicily over the centuries, including the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Normans, and others.
3. **Art and Architecture:** The cathedral is a prime example of the artistic and architectural heritage of Sicily and has influenced the development of similar structures throughout the region. Its intricate carvings, stained-glass windows, and richly decorated chapels have inspired other artists and architects, and have contributed to the cultural legacy of the region.
4. **Economic Impact:** As a major tourist attraction, the cathedral has had a significant economic impact on the city of Palermo and the surrounding region. It has helped to create jobs in the tourism industry, and has contributed to the local economy by attracting visitors from around the world.

Task 3

There are several cathedrals in Spain, Portugal, and Bulgaria that are similar to the Cathedral of Palermo in terms of architectural style, historical significance, and cultural influence. Here are a few examples:

Spain:

Cathedral of Burgos: This Gothic cathedral is considered one of the finest examples of Spanish Gothic architecture and is known for its elaborate stained-glass windows, ornate carvings, and intricate stone tracery.

Seville Cathedral: This Gothic-style cathedral, located in Seville, Spain, is one of the largest cathedrals in the world and is known for its ornate decoration, including intricate carvings, stained-glass windows, and richly decorated chapels.

Portugal:

Lisbon Cathedral: Also known as the Sé de Lisboa, this cathedral is a fine example of Portuguese Gothic architecture and features elaborate stone carvings, richly decorated chapels, and intricate stained-glass windows.

Bulgaria:

Rila Monastery: This medieval Bulgarian Orthodox monastery is a World Heritage Site and is known for its richly decorated church, which features intricate frescoes, wooden carvings, and elaborate iconostases.

HANDOUT FOR THE SECOND GROUP

Palazzo dei Normanni

Palazzo dei Normanni (Palace of the Normans) is a historic palace located in the city of Palermo, Sicily. Over the centuries, the palace has undergone many renovations and additions, and today it is home to the Sicilian Regional Assembly.

TASK DESCRIPTION

Task 1

1. When was the building initially built? How do you translate the name of the building in English?
2. What was the descent of the Normans who conquered Palermo in 1072? Where did they come from? What did they build on the site?
4. What is the architectural style of the building? What are the typical architectural elements for this style?
5. What are the separate sections of the building? Film yourselves there miming/ performing/ presenting the functions of the sections.
6. What are the unique features of the The Palatine Chapel?

Task 2

Take photos/short videos and prepare a digital story by answering the questions above. Explain how Palazzo dei Normanni has impacted the life in Sicily.

Optional Task 3

Do some internet research and present similar chapels in your countries. Can you find similarities/differences?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Task 1

The Palazzo dei Normanni in Palermo, Sicily, is a historic palace with a rich and varied history. Originally built as a fortress in the 9th century, it later became the residence of the Norman kings of Sicily from the 11th to 13th centuries. The palace was a royal residence and a center of Norman political and cultural influence in Sicily. Over the years it has been rebuilt and expanded several times and today houses the Sicilian Regional Assembly.

This architectural masterpiece, known for its Norman-style design, ingeniously combines elements of Islamic, Byzantine and Norman cultures. The lavish decorations with exquisite

mosaics and frescoes add to its splendor. Among the remarkable treasures, the Palatine Chapel is an excellent example of Norman religious architecture, known worldwide for its splendor. "Palatine" comes from medieval Latin and means "of the palace" Historically, the office of a palatine conferred extensive powers over a given territory.

The Palazzo dei Normanni comprises several distinct sections:

1. The Norman Hall is the grandest and most impressive room in the Palace, serving various purposes such as official receptions, coronations, and banquets.
2. The Palatine Chapel: A small, ornate chapel within the Palace, hailed as a masterpiece of Norman-era religious architecture. Its intricate mosaics and opulent decoration, including gold-plated bronze doors and frescoes, set it apart.
3. The Royal Apartments: These private quarters accommodated the Norman kings and their families, adorned with elaborate frescoes, mosaics, and artistic masterpieces.
4. The Gardens: These beautiful gardens surrounding the Palace offered relaxation and recreation to the Norman rulers and their families.
5. The Stables: The Palace hosted stables for the horses of the Norman rulers and their armies.
6. The Kitchens: Extensive kitchens prepared meals for the Norman rulers and their esteemed guests.
7. The Courtyard: This large central courtyard witnessed official ceremonies, military parades, and recreational activities.

The Palatine Chapel, a unique and remarkable structure, boasts extraordinary features:

1. Mosaics: Its walls and ceiling are ornamented with intricate and vibrant mosaics, portraying biblical scenes and portraits of significant people, including Norman rulers.
2. Ornate Decoration: Gold-plated bronze doors, frescoes, and other artistry contribute to the chapel's lavish decoration, making it one of Europe's most beautifully adorned religious spaces.
3. Byzantine Influence: Reflecting the time's strong influence on Norman Sicily, the chapel showcases distinct elements of Byzantine art, setting it apart from other contemporary religious buildings.
4. Royal Significance: The Palatine Chapel played a vital role in royal ceremonies, symbolizing Norman power and prestige. Its resplendent decoration and artwork reflect the wealth and influence of the Norman dynasty.

5. Historical Significance: An integral part of Norman Sicily's history, the Palatine Chapel played a role in significant regional events. It remains a cherished cultural and architectural site, attracting countless visitors yearly.

Task 2

The Palazzo dei Normanni has played a significant role in shaping Sicily's perception of power and political significance. Built in the 9th century, it has served as a seat of government and a royal palace for various rulers throughout its history, including the Norman kings of Sicily, the Hohenstaufen emperors, and the Spanish rulers.

The palace's imposing architecture, which blends elements of Byzantine, Arab, and Gothic styles, reflects the political and cultural mix of the region and serves as a symbol of its diverse history. The intricate decoration and golden mosaics of the "Cappella Palatina" in the palace were a testament to the wealth, power, and influence of the Norman rulers who commissioned it.

The continued use of the Palazzo dei Normanni as a political centre, hosting official events and exhibitions, has reinforced its reputation as a symbol of authority and stability.

Optional Task 3

While there may be chapels with similar architectural styles or elements in Bulgaria, Tenerife, and Portugal, there is no replica of the Palatine Chapel. The Palatine Chapel is unique in its combination of Norman, Byzantine, and Arab influences and its size, decoration, and historical significance. However, these countries have many other impressive chapels and religious buildings, each with distinct features and architectural styles. For example, Bulgaria is home to the Rila Monastery, considered one of the country's most important cultural and architectural sites. At the same time, Tenerife is known for its beautiful churches, including the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Visitors can admire the ornate architecture and decoration of the Sé Cathedral in Lisbon and the Chapel of the Palace of Mafra in Portugal.

CHAPTER 5 – Environmental Activism

Main topic

CULTIVATING CHANGE



Role and importance of flora and fauna in national parks.
Current challenges.
Environmental activism



Competence in science
Civil competence
Language competence
Personal, social and learning competence

'CULTIVATING CHANGE: INTEGRATING CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT, AND ACTIVISM'

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

1. Objectives: This intensive one-day training session blends the key elements of environmental awareness, cultural crafts, and effective campaign planning to empower participants with a holistic understanding of how these components can drive positive change within communities. Through interactive discussions, hands-on activities, and collaborative exercises, participants will explore the connections between sustainability, culture, and impactful activism. **Materials:** Markers, pens, cameras or smart phones; flip chart paper

Session 1: Enriching Environmental Awareness: Begin with an introduction to environmental challenges and their impacts on both local and global levels. Foster a group discussion where participants openly share their perceptions and concerns about environmental issues. Explore the intersection of environmental concerns with cultural heritage, emphasizing cultural connections.

Session 2: Crafting Cultural Sustainability: Understand the role of cultural crafts in promoting sustainable practices. Engage participants in a hands-on craft-making session using eco-friendly materials. Facilitate a reflective dialogue to discuss the significance of artistic skills as agents of change.

Session 3: Blueprint for Effective Campaigns: Introduce campaign planning principles, covering goal setting, identifying target audiences, and crafting impactful messages. Organize a group activity for participants to brainstorm campaign concepts that merge environmental and cultural elements—guide participants in mapping out the campaign journey and defining key steps and strategies.

Session 4: Campaign Design and Storytelling: Explore the design of compelling campaign materials such as posters, social media content, and pamphlets. Lead a workshop on constructing narratives seamlessly blending cultural identity and environmental consciousness. Emphasize the importance of authenticity in ensuring campaign messages align with cultural values.

Session 5: Campaign Presentation and Peer Feedback: Facilitate group presentations where participants showcase their campaign concepts and materials. Encourage peer feedback and initiate open discussions on the presented campaign ideas. Conclude with final reflections, allowing participants to share insights gained from the workshop.

Key Takeaways: Develop a heightened awareness of environmental challenges and their cultural implications. Gain practical experience in crafting eco-friendly cultural crafts with sustainability in focus. Acquire foundational skills in devising and outlining effective campaigns that unite cultural heritage and environmental messages.

HOW WE DID IT

In the picturesque Zingaro Reserve of Sicily, the participants embarked on a guided nature walk through the area, led by the knowledgeable Francesco Andragna, who used to be a park ranger. We chose the Reserve for our educational activity because the management authority is trying to preserve this exceptional biological diversity. Conservation initiatives focus on maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem, protecting endangered species, and raising awareness about the importance of sustainable practices.

The Reserve's landscapes range from coastal cliffs and beaches to rocky coves and steep hillsides. These varied habitats offer niches for a wide array of species and contribute to the area's unique beauty. The area boasts many endemic plant species adapted to the region's Mediterranean climate. Among the prominent plant species are Aleppo pines, Mediterranean shrubs like rosemary, thyme, and sage, and wildflowers that paint the landscape with vibrant colours.

The trainer Francesco Andragna led a walking tour around and shed light on the importance of responsible interactions with the environment and each individual's role in its preservation. The echoes of their footsteps served as a reminder of the impact they could collectively make.

In the next session, "Crafting Cultural Sustainability," we emphasised on preserving local crafts, part of the local cultural heritage related to wheat processing, and interweaving with dwarf palm and other vegetable fibres. Guided by the facilitator Mallory Echlos, they delved into the art of crafting, creating beautiful pieces inspired by the region's rich cultural heritage. As they tried to weave together fibres and leaves, they felt a deeper connection to nature and its inherent beauty. Amid laughter and conversations, the participants discovered how cultural crafts could serve as a conduit for change. As they concluded the nature walk, the message was clear: the Zingaro Reserve was more than a scenic spot—it was a call to action for a greener, more sustainable future.

After a delightful lunch break among the stunning landscape overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea, the group reconvened for "Blueprint for Effective Campaigns." Here, they delved into the strategic aspects of activism and advocacy. The facilitator Lidya Slavkova introduced them to the intricate process of campaign planning, from setting clear goals to crafting resonating messages. In groups, they brainstormed campaign concepts that ingeniously combined environmental concerns and cultural roots, related with the preservation of Zingaro Reserve and prevention of wild-fires. The sun-drenched surroundings seemed to amplify their creative energy.

The journey continued with "Campaign Design and Storytelling." Under the shade of a gnarled olive tree, participants explored the art of storytelling as a catalyst for change. They learned to design compelling campaign materials, from posters to social media content, all while fusing cultural identity and environmental consciousness. As anecdotes of local traditions intertwined with discussions of design elements, it was clear that their stories were becoming a powerful force.

The finale arrived with "Campaign Presentation and Peer Feedback." The group gathered once again, eager to share their creations and ideas. Each presentation was met with applause and thoughtful questions from their peers. As participants received feedback, the feeling of

camaraderie and mutual support was palpable. They marvelled at how their crafts and campaigns embodied the essence of nature and culture, a testament to their shared values. The day ended with shared reflections as the sun began to dip below the horizon. The participants spoke of newfound insights, the joy of crafting, and the profound connections they had forged with their fellow changemakers. The Zingaro Reserve had not only been a backdrop for this journey but had played an integral role in shaping the participants' understanding of their environment, their heritage, and the potential for positive change.

'SURVIVORS IN BOSCO ANGIMBÈ'

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

This is an experiential learning activity in the Bosco Angimbè Forest, Sicily, incorporating the ideas and theories of Stefano Mancuso.

Objective: Trainees will understand the importance of protecting the environment, learn about environmental issues and solutions, and develop strategies for reducing their own environmental impact.

1. **Introduction:** Start by gathering trainees in a central location in the forest and providing an overview of the session's goals and objectives. Explain that the aim of the session is to raise awareness of the importance of the forest environment and to encourage trainees to think about their own role in protecting the environment. Introduce the work of Stefano Mancuso, a leading expert on plant intelligence and the founder of the field of plant neurobiology.

2. **Safety briefing:** Provide a safety briefing to ensure that all trainees understand the rules and guidelines for the activity. Make sure that trainees are aware of any potential hazards, such as poisonous plants or wildlife, and emphasize the importance of following all safety protocols.

3. **Warm-up activity:** Engage trainees in a warm-up activity, such as a scavenger hunt, to get them moving and focused on the environment around them. Ask trainees to find different types of plants in the forest and make note of what they see. *A scavenger hunt - a game, typically played in an extensive outdoor area, in which participants have to collect a number of miscellaneous objects, and then tell stories or ask questions about them.*

4. **Guided tour:** Lead a guided tour of the forest, pointing out key features of the environment, such as different types of trees and plants, streams, and wildlife. Discuss the important role that forests play in maintaining the health of the planet and highlight the various benefits they provide, such as cleaning the air, providing habitats for wildlife, and preventing soil erosion. Emphasize the ideas of Stefano Mancuso, who argues that plants are intelligent beings capable of communication and problem-solving.

5. **Environmental impact discussion:** Stop at different points along the tour to discuss the impacts that humans can have on the environment, both positive and negative. Encourage the participants to think about ways that they can reduce their impact on the environment and to discuss potential solutions to environmental challenges, such as deforestation and pollution. Emphasize the importance of preserving forests and the critical role that they play in maintaining the health of the planet.

6. **Mancuso's theories:** After the guided tour, gather the participants together and introduce them to some of the key theories and concepts from Mancuso's work. Discuss the idea that plants are intelligent beings with complex communication systems and the ability to sense and respond to their environment. Emphasize the importance of understanding and respecting the intelligence and capabilities of plants, as well as the role that they play in maintaining the health of the planet.

Second option

Group formation: Divide the participants into small groups and assign each group a designated area within the forest. Provide each group with a map of the area and basic survival supplies, such as a compass, knife, and water.

Survival challenges: Provide groups with a series of survival challenges, designed to test their problem-solving skills, creativity, and resourcefulness. Challenges may include building a shelter, starting a fire, finding water, and foraging for food. Encourage the trainees to work together, using their knowledge of the environment and their available resources, to complete the challenges.

7. Action planning: Encourage trainees to brainstorm and develop ideas on initiating their own local campaigns when launching 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM campaign for protecting the environment. Encourage trainees to think about what they can do, both individually and collectively, to help preserve the environment in their local surroundings. Emphasize the importance of working to protect forests and plants and the critical role that they play in maintaining the health of the planet.

8. Closing: End the session by reflecting on what trainees have learned and reminding them of the importance of environmental awareness. Provide trainees with materials, such as brochures or posters, to help them continue to spread the message about the importance of protecting the environment. Encourage trainees to learn more about the work of Stefano Mancuso and to explore the fascinating world of plant intelligence and the important role that plants play in maintaining the health of the planet.

HOW WE DID IT

The objective of the activity in the Bosco Angimbè Forest of Sicily was clear: to understand the significance of protecting the environment, learn about environmental issues and solutions, and develop strategies for reducing their own environmental impact. When designing and performing this session, we followed the Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, whose framework explains how individuals learn through experiences. Developed by David A. Kolb, the theory proposes a four-stage learning cycle that involves concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Therefore, we also included some special activities, related with nature: building camp fire safely, building up tents and tent camp and spending an overnight in the forest. For this part, the local Scout organization helped us and assisted the process.

Initially, the trainees were provided with necessary materials, and their adventure began with an introduction by their Italian guide Francesco Adragna. The guide explained the goals of the session and emphasized the importance of the forest environment. He also reminded the participants about Stefano Mancuso's concept on the 'incredible journey of plants', especially the travelling of species endemic for island of Sicily, like: the ancient oak forests, Mediterranean maquis, and diverse birdlife.

Before venturing further, a safety briefing was conducted to ensure everyone's well-being. The trainees were informed about potential hazards and the importance of adhering to safety protocols during the activity.

To warm up, the trainees engaged in a lively scavenger hunt. They enthusiastically scoured the forest, searching for various types of plants while immersing themselves in the lush surroundings. This part of the session was led by Mallory Echlos and Valentina Caradonna from the Association 'Bosco Angimbè', Italy.

With the group in high spirits, the guide then led them on a guided tour of the forest. They admired different types of trees, plants, streams, and wildlife, learning about the forest's critical role in maintaining the planet's health. However, as they ventured deeper into the forest, they encountered traces of past wildfires that had left a devastating impact on the landscape.

The guide explained that wildfires were one of the most significant human impacts on the environment. They pointed out charred remains of trees and explained that these wildfires were often the result of human activities such as negligence, campfires left unattended, or deliberate acts of arson. The trainees observed firsthand how such fires could destroy vast areas of the forest, displacing wildlife and disrupting the delicate ecological balance.

At different points during the tour, the group paused to discuss human impacts on the environment, both positive and negative. They brainstormed ways to reduce their environmental footprint and addressed challenges like deforestation, pollution, and the prevention of wildfires. The trainees realized the significance of preserving forests and their role in preventing such devastating fires from occurring.

Next, After forming small groups, the trainees were allocated specific sections within the forest, where they embarked on a series of challenges aimed at assessing their problem-solving abilities and adaptability. Armed with tents and essential survival gear, they collaborated as a team to build shelters and start campfires, demonstrating their resourcefulness and knowledge of the environment. Additionally, they successfully provided water sources and food to spend the night in the forest. This success highlighted their ability to work together effectively and thrive in a natural setting.

Inspired to take action, the trainees brainstormed ideas for launching local campaigns during the 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM for environmental protection. They acknowledged the significance of preserving forests and plants for the planet's well-being and discussed collective and individual initiatives.

CHAPTER 6 – A City Council Simulation

Main topic
ACTIVE CITIZENS

Communication competence
Social competence
Civil competence
Critical thinking



PROS AND CONS FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY CITY POLICY: TRAINEES' DEBATE

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

A. Objectives:

In this session, participants will engage in a debate format to explore arguments for and against environmentally-friendly city policies. The objectives are to:

- Familiarize trainees with key arguments on this topic.
- Develop critical thinking skills and the ability to express opinions effectively.
- Promote active participation and teamwork.
- Offer an engaging learning experience about the pros and cons of environmentally-friendly city policies.

Materials: Whiteboard and markers; Chairs and tables arranged in a circular format; Handout with a list of pros and cons of environmentally-friendly city policies; A bell or other noise maker to signal the start and end of each round of debate

B. Agenda:

1. Introduction (5 minutes): Introduce the topic of the debate and the objectives of the session. Then explain the rules of the debate, which have been preliminary drafted. After you have introduced the rules, make sure to have them displayed either on a screen or a flip chart, so that everybody sees them. Suggest the time limits for each round of debate and announce who will be the time keeper.

2. Team Formation (5 minutes): Divide the group into two teams, each representing one side of the debate (pros or cons). Explain the role of each team member and their responsibilities during the debate.

3. Preparation (30 minutes): Give each team a handout with a list of the pros and cons of environmentally-friendly city policies. Allow time for each group to read the handout and discuss their arguments. Make sure to encourage trainees to ask questions and clarify any misconceptions. You might want to arrange a 'stage' for the speakers or a 'city council meeting room' to get authenticity. You can also name the city and the imaginary City Council.

4. Debate (45 minutes): After the teams are ready, signal the start of the first round of debate. The pro-side team first presents their arguments. The con-side will have a chance to rebut the arguments presented. Repeat this process for the second round of debate, but change turns. The pro-side will have a chance to rebut in the final round.

5. Wrap-up (15 minutes): When the time for the debate is over, summarize the key arguments presented by both teams. Encourage the trainees to reflect on what they learned from the debate and how it could inform their personal opinions on environmentally-friendly city policies. End the session with a closing statement and praise for the trainees' efforts.

C. Assessment: The trainees' participation in the debate will be evaluated based on their critical thinking skills, the ability to articulate opinions, and the quality of their arguments. The facilitator can also use a rubric to assess the trainees' teamwork and their ability to work collaboratively and respectfully with each other.

HOW WE DID IT

This activity took place the next day after the trainees had already spent a night in the tent camp in the Bosco Angimbè Forest. In the morning, they were about to embark on a unique journey to challenge their perceptions and ignite their critical thinking skills. The objective of the day's activity was clear—to explore the arguments for and against environmentally-friendly policy in the imaginary city of Greenville.

As they settled into their seats, the trainer Noor Harjani Daswani from Creativa Association, Spain and Margarida Malta from the European Institute "For Citizens", Portugal unveiled the session's objectives, which included learning about the pros and cons of such policies and developing their ability to articulate opinions and defend them in a lively debate in English as a second language. This adventure would require active participation and teamwork—a test of their collaborative spirit.

The instructor introduced the rules of the debate, explaining that it would be a series of rounds where each team would present their arguments and have a chance to rebut their opponents. The trainees were divided into two teams—one defending the pros and the other the cons arguments. Each team member enthusiastically put themselves in their role, eager to contribute their unique perspective.

Before the debate began, the instructor gave a handout with the pros and cons of environmentally-friendly city policies. The teams huddled together, engrossed in heated discussions, dissecting each point meticulously. Questions were raised, misconceptions clarified, and ideas sharpened.

With preparation time over, the instructors signalled the start of the first round. The pro-side took the stage confidently, presenting their well-researched arguments with conviction. As they finished, the con-side responded with a counterattack, eloquently challenging the points made by their opponents.

Round after round, the debate raged on, the bell ringing to mark the beginning and end of each intense verbal battle. Emotions ran high, but the trainees remained respectful, embracing the challenge with grace and determination. They pushed the boundaries of their critical thinking skills, exploring new perspectives, and adapting their arguments as the debate unfolded.

As the final round approached, the area buzzed with anticipation. The con side took the floor first, passionately presenting their arguments. The pro side, now equipped with the knowledge from the previous rounds, fought back with eloquence and poise.

As the debate drew to a close, the instructor summarized the key arguments presented by both teams. It was evident that this lively experience had profoundly impacted the trainees. They learned about the complexities of environmentally-friendly city policies and the power of collaboration and effective communication.

During the wrap-up session, the facilitators encouraged the trainees to reflect on their learning in the wrap-up session. The heated debates sparked a newfound understanding, and

many changed their perspectives throughout the journey. With a sense of accomplishment, the trainees left the room with a deeper appreciation for the importance of such policies in shaping a sustainable future for the imaginary city of Greenville.

As they dispersed, the instructor couldn't help but feel proud of their efforts. The trainees had proven that the journey of exploring environmental issues could be a fun and engaging one. And as they stepped out into the city, they carried with them the seeds of informed opinions, ready to positively impact the world around them.

CHAPTER 7 – The Power of Digital Story Telling

Main topic
STORYTELLING

Digital competence
Learning-to-learn competence
Creative thinking
Linguistic competence



Digital Storytelling

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

Objective: Tell the participants that they will be asked to produce their own stories when doing the local campaign events. Therefore, they need to understand what digital storytelling is, explore different digital storytelling tools, and create their own digital story during the 'Quest in Sicily'. **Materials:** Computer or tablet for each student; Projector and screen; Access to the internet

Introduction (10 minutes): Begin by asking the group if they have ever heard of digital storytelling. Encourage them to share impressions, likings or dis likings. Share some examples of digital stories, such as short films, animations, or interactive documentaries. Finally, explain that today's session will focus on creating digital stories using various tools.

Part 1: Understanding Digital Storytelling (15 minutes): To start, present a slide show with definitions and examples of digital storytelling. Discuss the different elements of a digital story, such as characters, plot, setting, and multimedia elements like images, videos, and audio. Ask trainees to share some of their favourite stories and analyse why they like them. Then you might want to encourage the participants to think about a story they would like to tell and start designing such an exemplary story, including all the elements of a good story.

Part 2: Exploring Digital Storytelling Tools (20 minutes): After the participants have finished telling the story, show a demo of a few different digital storytelling tools, such as Adobe Spark, Canva, or Powtoon. Have trainees explore the tools on their own and choose the one they want to use for their story. Offer support and answer any questions as trainees work on their stories.

Part 3: Creating Digital Stories (30 minutes): Give the participants time to work on their stories using the tool they selected. Encourage them to think about the elements of a digital story as they create.

Conclusion (10 minutes): Ask the participants to share their stories with the group. Encourage them to give feedback to each other, such as what they liked and what they would have done differently. Summarize the key points of the session and the importance of digital storytelling in today's world.

Assessment: Observe trainees' participation in the creation of their digital stories. Evaluate the finished digital stories for elements of a digital story, such as characters, plot, setting, and multimedia elements.

HOW WE DID IT

The objective of the day's activity was to immerse the participants in the world of digital storytelling. In the beginning, the Spanish trainers surveyed to find out how many participants had worked with applications for digital storytelling. It came out that almost 60% of the young people reported a high level of digital competency, which made the session much more inclusive. Next, the participants were told they would use their newly developed or upgraded skills to tell the stories of their '16 Days of Activism National Campaign Events online. They were tasked with producing their own stories during the local campaign events. For this, they needed to understand the essence of digital storytelling, explore various tools, and create their digital narratives.

As the day began, the Spanish trainer Noor Harjani Daswani and Margarida Malta, European Institute "For Citizens", Portugal introduced the concept of digital storytelling, asking the group about their experience. Excitement filled the air as participants shared their impressions, likes, and dislikes related to digital storytelling. To illustrate the power of digital stories, the instructor showcased examples of a short film produced for one of the Creative projects, sparking creativity and curiosity among the participants.

The session delved into the intricacies of digital storytelling, revealing its elements like characters, plot, setting, and multimedia features such as images, videos, and audio. The participants were encouraged to think about the story they wanted to tell, igniting their imaginations and setting the foundation for their digital journeys.

In the adventure's next part, the participants explored different digital storytelling tools, including Adobe Spark, Canva. The instructor demonstrated the use of these tools, and the trainees were free to explore them independently. With determination in their eyes, they selected the tools that resonated with their creative spirits, ready to breathe life into their unique narratives.

In the heart of Sicily, the participants delved into creating their digital stories under the warm sun. Fueled by inspiration and guided by the elements they had learned, they worked tirelessly, weaving words, images, and sounds into interesting tales. The instructor offered support and answered questions, ensuring each participant's story bloomed in full glory.

Finally, the participants reflected on the significance of this influential art form in today's world. The instructor summarized the session's key points, emphasizing how digital storytelling allows voices to be heard, ideas to be shared, and connections to be formed in an increasingly interconnected world.

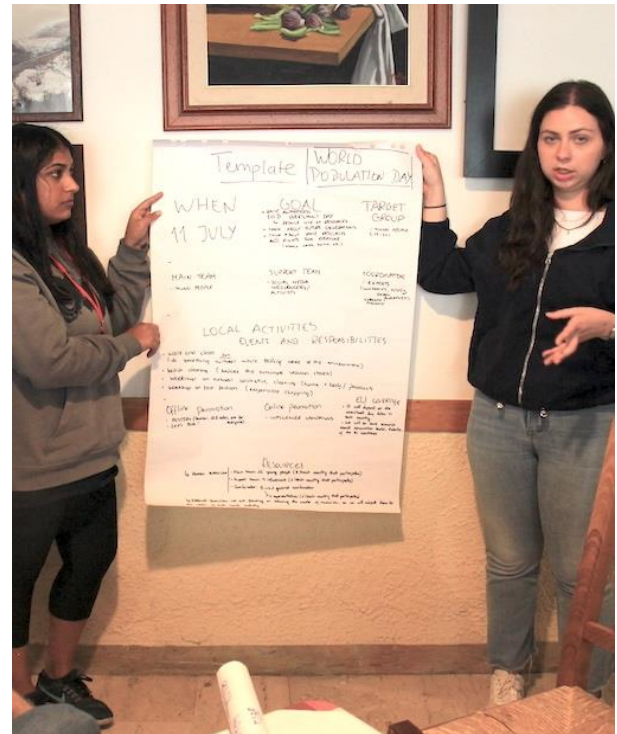
CHAPTER 8 – Planning Campaign Events

Main topics

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

ANALYZING LOCAL PROBLEMS

PLANNING INITIATIVES



Advocacy skills
Planning skills
Digital competence
Language competence
Personal, social and learning competence
Civil competence

Planning '16 Days of Activism' National Campaign Events

SUGGESTED SCENARIO

Objective: In this training session, participants will learn to plan impactful national campaign events during the '16 Days of Activism.' By addressing social and environmental issues, they will promote active citizenship and inspire change across Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

Step 1: Understanding the '16 Days of Activism' Initiative: Talk about the significance of the '16 Days of Activism' initiative in raising awareness and driving positive change. Then highlight the power of collaboration across borders to address pressing challenges effectively.

Step 2: Analyzing Local Contexts: Divide into small groups representing Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Identify unique social and environmental issues in each country that need addressing during the campaign events.

Step 3: Brainstorming Event Ideas: Then, while in national teams, engage the participants in lively discussions within the groups to generate innovative event ideas. Let them use their mother language to talk about their communities' issues. Ask them to explore diverse formats, such as workshops, seminars, exhibitions, and community outreach programs. At this stage you might want to encourage them to search the Internet and find local examples.

Step 4: Forming Teams: Create teams to combine ideas and strengths from different countries. Foster creativity and synergy through collaboration.

Step 5: Developing Action Plans; Outline specific goals, activities, and timelines for each campaign event. Consider the target audience, partners, and available resources to maximize impact.

Step 6: Empowering with Digital Tools; Learn to leverage social media, online platforms, and digital storytelling techniques to amplify campaign messages. Craft engaging content to resonate with the target audience.

Step 7: Rehearsing and Fine-Tuning ; Present action plans to receive feedback from facilitators and peers. Refine strategies to ensure effectiveness and cohesion.

Talk about the shared mission of making a positive impact during the '16 Days of Activism.'

HOW WE DID IT

The objective of the training session was to equip the participants with the skills and knowledge to plan impactful national campaign events during the '16 Days of Activism', the flagship Activity of the BeActive project. These are a series of national initiatives, which should reach 200 people offline and 220 online and have a high-visibility Europe-wide. The Campaign would be coordinated by 16 youth workers from the Partner organizations, supported by the Project coordinators.

Therefore, the Bulgarian trainers did some preliminary preparation for the session. Together with the Management team and the Communication officers, they developed a Guide for Organising National Actions and Events. This set of materials contains examples and valuable tips on motivating and involving young people in a cause and a Template for Planning Campaign Events and Human Rights Calendar with celebrated dates worldwide. The Guide can be downloaded at <https://paralel-silistra.net/active/publications/>

The young participants had the opportunity to read the book before coming to the training or even during the training in Sicily. Therefore, before starting the Planning session, they had already discussed some event ideas informally.

The Bulgarian facilitators: Diana Bebenova-Nikolova and Lydia Svetoslavova from NGO 'Parallel-Silistra', Bulgaria set the stage, introducing the significance of the '16 Days of Activism' initiative. They emphasized the power of collective efforts and collaboration in addressing pressing challenges worldwide. Afterwards, they encouraged the participants to share their campaign ideas or feedback inspired by the Guide for Organising National Actions and Events.

Having received valuable comments, the trainers divided the participants into small groups, representing their respective countries, and with the help of the local coordinators, engaged them in lively discussions, sharing insights into their unique social and environmental issues.

With a clearer understanding of their objectives, the groups delved into the planning process. They brainstormed innovative event ideas, exploring various formats such as workshops, seminars, exhibitions, and community outreach programs. The facilitators guided them in devising strategies to maximize the reach and impact of their events, considering the target audience, partners, and available resources. They used the Template for Planning Campaign Events to design their campaigns and better structure their discussions.

Recognizing the power of collaboration, some national groups put forward ideas for joint cross-border events, combining ideas and strengths from different countries. This cross-pollination of cultures, experiences, and perspectives sparked a wave of creativity and opened new possibilities for the campaign events.

The groups progressed to develop concrete action plans, outlining specific goals, activities, and timelines for their national campaign events. The facilitators provided guidance, sharing best practices and successful case studies from previous '16 Days of Activism' initiatives.

As the training session continued, the participants discussed using digital tools to amplify their campaign messages. They explored social media, online platforms, and digital storytelling techniques, crafting engaging content that resonated with their target audience.

With plans in place, the participants rehearsed and fine-tuned their campaign events. They presented their ideas to receive feedback from facilitators and peers, refining their strategies to perfection. This collaborative process strengthened bonds among the participants and created a sense of unity in their shared mission.

The training session culminated in a closing ceremony, where the participants exchanged tokens of appreciation and shared heartfelt words of encouragement. They left the room empowered with newfound knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm, ready to drive meaningful change through their national campaign events.

As the participants returned to their respective countries, they carried the passion and determination to make a difference. Across borders, cultures, and languages, they formed a global network of changemakers united to create a better world—one campaign event at a time. The '16 Days of Activism' would forever be etched in their hearts as a transformative journey that ignited hope and inspired collective action.

CHAPTER 9 - Evaluation. Testimonials. Other Educational tools



Evaluation Questionnaires and Interviews



Results and Project Indicators



Personal sharing and feedback

EVALUATION. TESTIMONIALS. OTHER EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

EVALUATION

The participants gathered to evaluate their growth and celebrate their accomplishments as the final day arrived. With hearts filled with gratitude, they bid farewell, promising to keep in touch for future activities, knowing that this adventure had left an indelible mark on their lives.

To evaluate the impact of the training, we had preliminary designed two particular Questionnaires based on the Competence Model for pretraining and after training surveying. The whole process was online by using Google Forms. All participants received the Questionnaires, and all submitted back their answers. Since all participants answered in the affirmative with "Yes," it suggests that the Erasmus+ Training of Trainers met the participants' expectations. This positive feedback indicates that the training program successfully met the participants' expectations and provided them with a satisfactory experience.

For the youth group of 16 learners, YOUTHPASS, Europass CV and project certificates were developed and emailed in recognition of their commitment to personal growth and contribution to learning. YOUTHPASS, in particular, played an essential role in helping participants reflect on their learning outcomes and celebrate their achievements.

The improved competencies of 9 youth workers and 16 youth volunteers to use project tools and reach rural communities (Project Objectives 2 and 3) were assessed by the personal assessment tool. The latter consists of specialized evaluation questionnaires. The instrument was applied at the beginning and at the end of the training to measure several indicators originally planned within the project.

Here is an analysis of the achieved results and some comments on the score:

1. Number of interviewed participants – a total of 25 people:

- Planned: 90% of participants return the questionnaires.
- Achieved: 100% questionnaires completed and returned.

Comment: This is a very positive result as all 25 participants completed and returned the questionnaires via Google Forms. This shows a high level of engagement and commitment on the part of the participants.

2. Improved environmental awareness and willingness to care for nature:

- Planned: 90% report improvement.
- Achieved: 92%.

Comment: This result shows that the training contributed significantly to improving the participants' environmental awareness and their desire to care for nature.

3. Improved understanding of the interrelationships between project topics:

- Planned: 90% reported positive.
- Achieved: 92%.

Comment: This result shows that the participants have a deeper understanding of how the different topics of the project are interconnected. This shows effective communication and teaching during training.

4. Improved language skills:

- Planned: 50% reported positive.

- Achieved: 65%.

Comment: Although there is an improvement in language skills, it is important that participants continue to build language competencies. The current 65% is promising and suggests progress.

5. Improved competencies on project topics:

- Planned: 90% satisfaction level.
- Achieved: 92%.

Comment: The result slightly exceeded expectations in terms of participants' satisfaction with their improved competencies in the training topics. This result reflects the effectiveness of the training materials and the methods used.

Overall, the training achieved its objectives successfully, with most of the achieved indicators exceeding the planned results. The reported factors give reason to claim a positive impact on the participants.

Meanwhile, another plan was set in motion for the group of 4 youth coaches. They will be assessed against the ETS COMPETENCE MODEL for trainers and youth workers. These models identify seven areas of competence for trainers working internationally, covering everything from understanding and facilitating learning processes to developing intercultural competence.

At the end of the training, the participants were satisfied and felt equipped to inspire and guide other young people with fewer opportunities, empowering them through peer learning.

TESTIMONIALS

Maria

The 'Quest in Sicily' was a transformative experience, immersing me in novel knowledge and meaningful connections with diverse individuals. I eagerly look forward to future engagements for personal and intellectual growth.

Nikol

The training in Italy was a great experience; it was something new, exciting and instructive. After the training lectures, I began to look at nature from a different angle, and we visited a vast botanical garden full of various plants that I had never met before. I met many new people; we had a fascinating cultural exchange and an excellent time together.

Jeren

The Erasmus+ youth study in Sicily has been the most exciting and transformative experience I've had so far. I am a student of pedagogy and I realized how well prepared the individual sessions are and how they successfully achieve their educational goals. I would also like to become a youth coach in the future and encourage young women to make changes for the better.

Inna, Bulgaria

The Erasmus+ youth training program in Sicily has proven to be the most exhilarating and life-changing opportunity I've encountered thus far. As a pedagogy student, I've been deeply impressed by the meticulous planning and effectiveness of the individual sessions in accomplishing their educational objectives. Looking ahead, I aspire to become a youth mentor and empower young women to strive for positive transformations in their lives.

Lidiya, Bulgaria

We live in a time when young people are required to be not only active but proactive. Being proactive is not easy, especially for those who live in distant towns and villages and have to make ends meet. The "BeActive" project encourages specifically these young people to develop their skills and self-confidence while having fun. It provides valuable learning experiences in international surroundings, which proved very useful for them and me as a youth trainer. We learned from and inspired each other during the project's 'Mission in Sicily' training part. Due to the BeActive educational program, I upgraded my skills and understanding of the needs and thinking of young people during each workshop, training, and event. Such a contribution is highly significant for my work efficiency as a youth trainer.

Giulia, Italy

This was my first Erasmus+ experience, and although I didn't have many expectations, it was terrific: being at home in Sicily while being connected with other cultures and having the opportunity to wander with the mind. The training and the project campaign activities helped me to deepen my environmental awareness and appreciation for the natural world.

The connection with nature was unique, and I enjoyed the surroundings: the Zingaro Nature Reserve, the Angimbè Forest and where we stayed in Calatafimi Segesta all have a lovely place in my memories and heart. After completing the training, I feel inspired and equipped with tools and ideas to improve my surroundings.

Eleonora, Italy

My experience with the BeActive project was extremely thrilling. I learned more about environmental sustainability thanks to being in direct contact with nature and through the constant dialogue with my colleagues, which helped me understand the various problems that afflict the environment today and its easy preventions and solutions. I think it would be great for more of my peers to be able to participate in projects like this.

Angela, Italy

I enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the training in Sicily. I am Sicilian and have lived here all my life, so it was great to show the participants from other countries around, and I even learned more about the history and culture of Palermo myself. It was also helpful to communicate with them because I had the chance to practice speaking English. Visiting the Zingaro Nature Reserve, learning about its history as the first nature reserve in Sicily, and seeing the beauty that it protects inspired me to defend better and promote nature.

Gino, Italy

I wasn't sure what to expect from the training in Sicily, but it was an enjoyable growing experience. I had the opportunity to practice speaking English and working on my communication skills with peers from other countries. It was challenging but fulfilling. I think I could help organise a training such as this in the future now that I have participated and gained better communication and community management skills.

Roberto, Italy

The experience with the training in Sicily was unique for me. I'm from Palermo, so it was a new experience to go into the Zingaro Nature Reserve and learn about the biodiversity there. I've also never been camping, so spending the night in a tent in the Angimbè Forest was exciting. Furthermore, interacting with the other participants from different countries and backgrounds was an enriching experience.

Melyssa, Portugal

The youth training program promoted the embrace of diversity through open dialogue and shared experiences. Learning practical green skills was a core component of the training, and the possibility of applying those skills to impact our community positively and beyond is significant. The activity encourages recognising the connection between cultures and the environment, equipping youth with the knowledge needed to make a greener future.

João, Portugal

The training in Sicily was a one-of-a-kind experience! Being gathered there with so many people from different backgrounds and coming together for a cause was special since we were fighting and aiming for better solutions for the struggles we are all facing nowadays.

Margarida, Portugal

What struck me the most during our delightful week in Sicily was sharing knowledge and experiences related to environmental awareness. I was genuinely enthralled by this diverse group of individuals from various backgrounds, each offering unique perspectives. Together, we observed, reflected upon, and critically examined environmental challenges that impact all of us. It became evident that it's within our power to effect real change in our collective

future. This positive experience allowed us to forge enduring memories and bonds we'll cherish.

Sol, Spain

I think that the training is an opportunity to meet people from other cultures, and it helps me to understand how, in different countries, humans interrelate with nature. My experience in Zingaro Reserve and the Angimbe Forest was beautiful because I love the scouts and campsites and learned many things from them. Also, I like the activities where you can improve your creativity, like the one we did in the natural reserve.

Noor, Spain

I've been very keen on social inclusion since years ago but with local communities in the majority. This Erasmus project helped me to work with international people. I think organising initiatives now is easier for me because we already planned them in the training and all talked about the activities we could do in Tenerife. The 'Mission in Sicily' also boosted my European awareness as a citizen due to the influence of the international group of young people from 4 different EU countries.

Victor, Spain

In my opinion, Spanish people are very similar to Portuguese and Italian, so I feel more related to them than to young people from other countries. The training in Sicily was my first international training experience. I have improved my capacity to work in a team, especially in another language like English. I learned about environmental problems in Italy, like the wildfire in Zingaro Reserve and the new concept of plant life by Stefano Mancuso.

Jorge, Spain

This project has been an unforgettable experience, and I am learning a lot from a leader like Diana. For me, it is an exceptional learning experience. The results of the project will be significant in the future:

- Creation of personal relationships with all countries.
- Facing innovative challenges with other social entities
- English improvement
- Awareness of European sentiment.
- Support environmental challenges that we will have to face in the future.
- Involve youth in socio-cultural activities.



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OTHER EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

The BeActive project partners created and published on the project website <https://paralel-silistra.net/active/> a set of innovative tools to enhance youth volunteers to train young people or initiate youth campaigns: <https://paralel-silistra.net/active/publications/>.

Firstly, the publication **“Digital Portfolio of the Project Partners”** talks about projects, initiatives, campaigns and other practices accomplished by the project partners.

Then, the **“BeActive Toolkit of Shared Practices”** in English is meant to inspire youth workers from the four countries with good examples of implemented initiatives for nature conservation, fostering tolerance towards differences, and promoting civic engagement. The Partners discussed and assembled the toolkit at a partner meeting in Tenerife (January 2023).

Another unique tool is the **‘Preliminary Agenda and Suggested Scenarios’** for the ‘Quest in Sicily’ training, which was approbated in April 2023. It holds examples of inspiring experiential approaches to youth training, tested on the island of Sicily, involving 20 young people.

Finally, the **“Guide to National Actions and Events – 16 Days of Activism”** enhances and inspires youth campaigns’ organization and performance, including the project campaign ‘16 Days of Activism’. It includes information on planning steps, online promotion, and national and European Union-level campaign awareness. The guide also describes sample activities that can inspire numerous new initiatives in other regions.

The project’s website contains many educational publications encouraging youth activism while enabling youth workers to benefit from working models in other countries. Lastly, you can find more video stories on <https://paralel-silistra.net/active/wiki/>.

To learn about our new activities, you can also follow the Facebook page BeActive <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100088391613086>.



BeActive project website



BeActive Facebook group

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