REPORT

of the training course

COMETS*

on Intercultural Competence
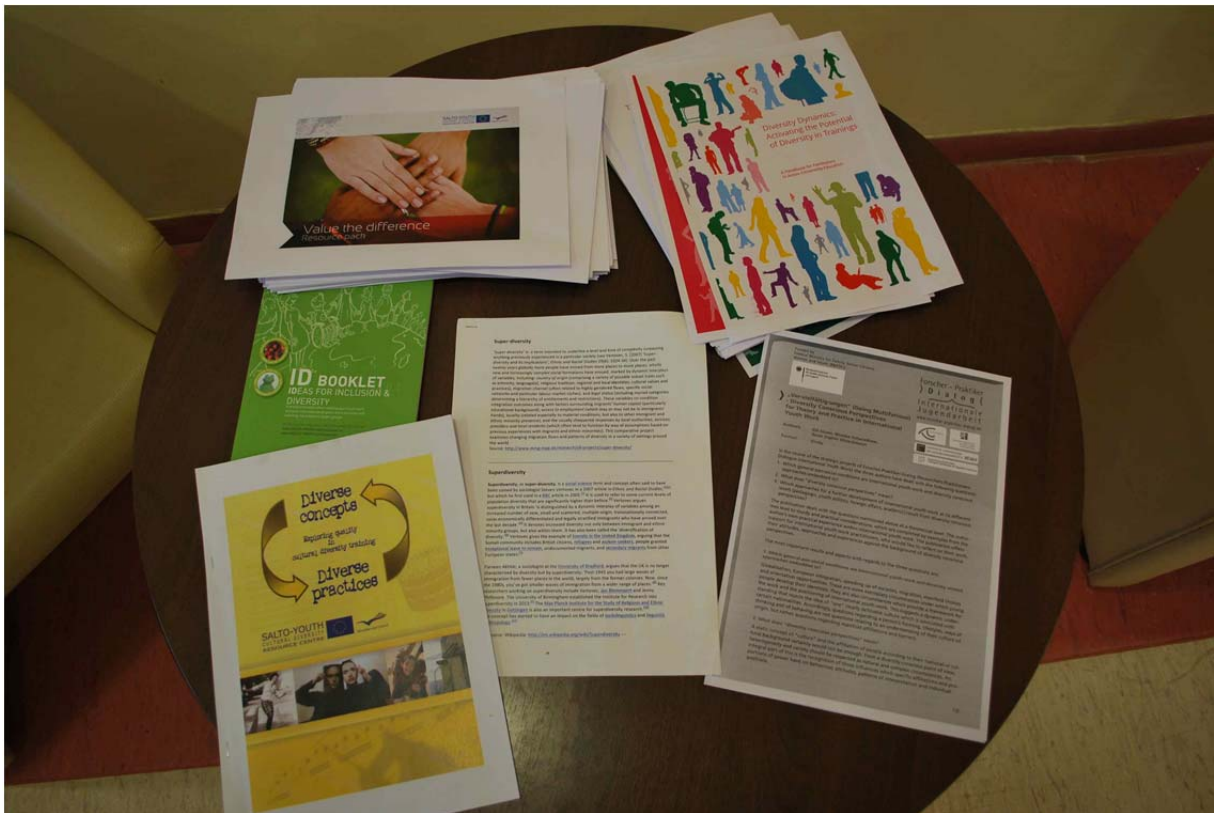
Background

In the context of the European Training Strategy (ETS) SALTO Training & Cooperation Resource Centre (SALTO T&C RC) developed the *ETS competence model for trainers working at international level* with criteria and indicators supporting trainers' competence development in training in the youth field (ref: www.salto-youth.net/trainercompetences).

In cooperation with several Erasmus+: Youth in Action National Agencies SALTO T&C RC developed a strategy to provide opportunities for trainers to [further] develop their competences according to their needs and needs of training providers like National Agencies, among others (ref: www.salto-youth.net/TrainerCompetenceDevelopment).
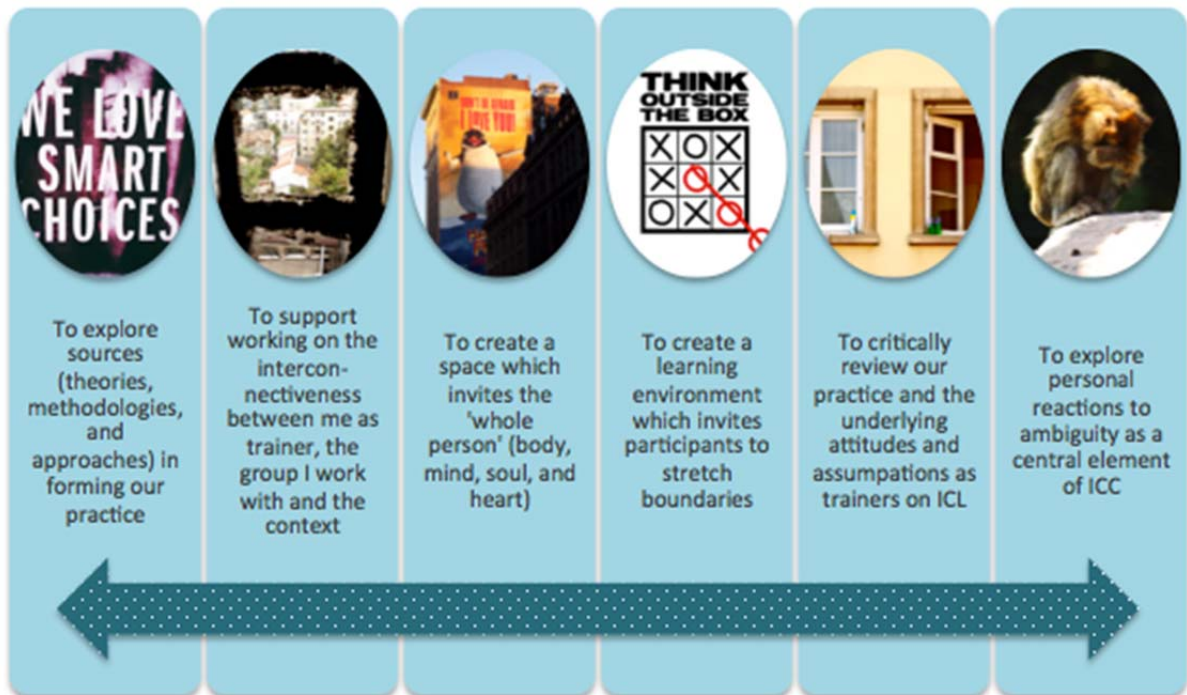
COMETS is a new training for trainers format und above mentioned long-term NA/SALTO cooperation project which will, in the forthcoming years, provide advanced trainers with opportunities to come together to reflect on, discuss and develop further on different competence areas of the ETS competence model. In the context of COMETS, *advanced* refers to trainer-learner having the capacity to direct his/her own learning and in particular to self-assess his/her competences in this activity with specific regard to Intercultural Competence (ICC).

The general aims of the COMETS training courses are:

- To contribute to quality development of youth work and of training practice in the field
- To put the ETS competence model in practice
- To support National Agencies in working with trainers on competence development
- To contribute to the professional development of trainers in the field

Intentions of the COMETS ICC course

| To explore sources (theories, methodologies, and approaches) in forming our practice | To support working on the interconnectiveness between me as trainer, the group I work with and the context | To create a space which invites the 'whole person' (body, mind, soul, and heart) | To create a learning environment which invites participants to stretch boundaries | To critically review our practice and the underlying attitudes and assumpations as trainers on ICL | To explore personal reactions to ambiguity as a central element of ICC |

The organisers

This first COMETS Training Course was hosted by the Bulgarian National Agencies for Erasmus+: Youth in Action and developed together with SALTO RCs Cultural Diversity (CD) and Training & Cooperation (T&C). The National Agencies of Cyprus and UK co-financed the hosting costs of this course.

The team of trainers

Peter Hofmann

Gisele Evrard Markovic

Trainers´ team evaluation

Overall a success

Overall the team considers the first edition of the series *COMETS training courses* on "Intercultural Competence" a success. The fact that – despite rather short notice - more than 70 advanced trainers applied to be participant in the course demonstrates that there seems to be a need for a course on this topic. The expectations and motivations were varied – also in the actual group of the 24 selected participants – but all expressed a readiness to work on their intercultural competence development.

Pax evaluation quotes:

- Honestly I loved it. I expected a bit more input from the trainers before coming there, but in the end I am happy about how it was (I enjoyed the responsibility being given to us, self-directed learning). So I can imagine if the other courses will be similar (with similarly focused, motivated and interested trainers), I think I will try to infiltrate to some more that might be useful for my work (well all of them would be, I am sure).

- From what I could observe, there were several factors which I think were important: • A concrete competence framework to work from – plus a suggested methodology about how to use it prior to the course. • Excellent, compatible, complementary trainers who had prepared (collected and sorted) an enormous amount of material for our consideration – you know your competences! • The vast majority of the participants had a lot of reflected experience in the specific field in question • An approach which invited participation, questioning, and allowed for open-ended sessions

ETS Competence Model – good starting point

The ETS Competence Profile as backbone of the course has proven to be an excellent starting point – as well for the designing of the course (the course was designed around the competences of the ICC area) as for the participants to get into it. Many of them appreciated the self-assessment they were invited to do before coming to the course – even though challenging they were appreciating the reflection it sparked off for them.

Pax evaluation quotes:

- Having this competence framework (which is still a work-in-progress) to use in self-reflection and assessment gives the opportunity to dive into the subjects deeply, to question hard what works for you AND THEN to discuss and compare with others.
- The ETS Competence Model makes a lot of sense and exploring among peers each one of the competence areas allowed me to understand it and use it much much more that just by reading the pdf or talking to someone about it

COMETS – a quality space for peer reflection and learning

The course was designed as a quality space for reflection and learning among peers. The team considers this as an essential characteristic of COMETS-Training courses for advanced trainers. Thus the methodology took care of creating an adequate environment for such a space and provided many possibilities for exchange and sharing. The depth of reflection and the readiness to review openly their practice was truly impressive.

- The TC was a real time to reflect and review our practice both on a collective and on an individual level. It shows the importance to review and to focus on practice evolution it's hard to take the time to do so but I could really improve some parts during the TC with impacts still showing up now.

- The training course gave me a broad space and "food for thoughts" for reflection upon my own practice as trainer, but also as individual. I reviewed in many senses my perception for what is my role as a trainer, about the relationship between trainer and learners and how this filed could be improved in future work. Aside this I am in a process of reflection upon my professional development and current occupation, and I believe the training course had a great impact on this.

Themes in the forefront – ambiguity!?!

A lot of emphasis was given to question what it means today to work on culture, intercultural learning and intercultural competence. Some doubts even arose if there is still space for working on intercultural learning after all; but any way all agreed to practice having many different perspectives and being open for the ambiguity and complexity that might arise from it. The participant evaluation highlights the relevance many give to the concept of ambiguity when reviewing Intercultural Learning – and emphasize at the same time the many questions connected to it!

Pax evaluation quotes:

- Intercultural learning as I was considering is dead. Something new will come and I need time to keep working on this reflection _Welcome intersectionality![to study] _Welcome ambiguity and acceptance of change [to study] _The links between values, culture and identity [to practice] _The 2 faces of identity: inside and outside [to practice] _The concept of culture is too broad and, for this reason, to weak. I need to separate things from the concept of culture or, even better, use a different one. [to solve]

- The key word would be: ambiguity. The TC gave me a great chance to reflect on how do I deal with this, how do I understand it. It was also my main expectation towards this TC.

One day more?!

The course could have benefitted from one more working day. The "Open Agenda" on the last day in the morning brought very fruitful and inspiring exchanges - but clearly needed more time to go deeper and perhaps even develop concrete ideas (for new tools, approaches, projects…).

Pax evaluation quotes:

- While I understand the concern these days about the length of tc's (e.g. "too long and we will not attract the really busy people") I feel strongly that one day should have been added to the format of the course. (I do not see parts of the programme which I would take away). This would have allowed us to concentrate on two areas which were missing for me, namely:
- Near the beginning of the course: a detailed exploration of the competence framework itself and the chance to compare our different and common understandings AND our experience and strategies for using it as a basis for self-assessment as trainers. (This would have had the added benefit of providing detailed feedback to the authors). • Near the end of the course: time for digestion of the course contents and to make more detailed personal plans for the

future; time to even work on possible common projects directly related to the themes of the course. And, indeed, to decide more concretely how/if we wanted to keep up the communication between us.

Beyond EU – YES!

The team (and some participants) considers the fact that there were participants from the MEDA and the EEAC-areas as an extra asset. It provided for an enhanced diversity in views and perspectives – which contributed to the ambiguity of the discussions and also to the depth of sharing and reflection.

Pax evaluation quotes:

- Whatever we decide to call "Intercultural" learning/dialogue/competence in the future – the contexts must always be taken into account. And the Europeans have to include partners from other areas of the world to enlarge those contexts – in this tc the highly motivated participation of colleagues from the Meda region really showed the value of this!! Such training requires very committed, competent trainers as we had this time.
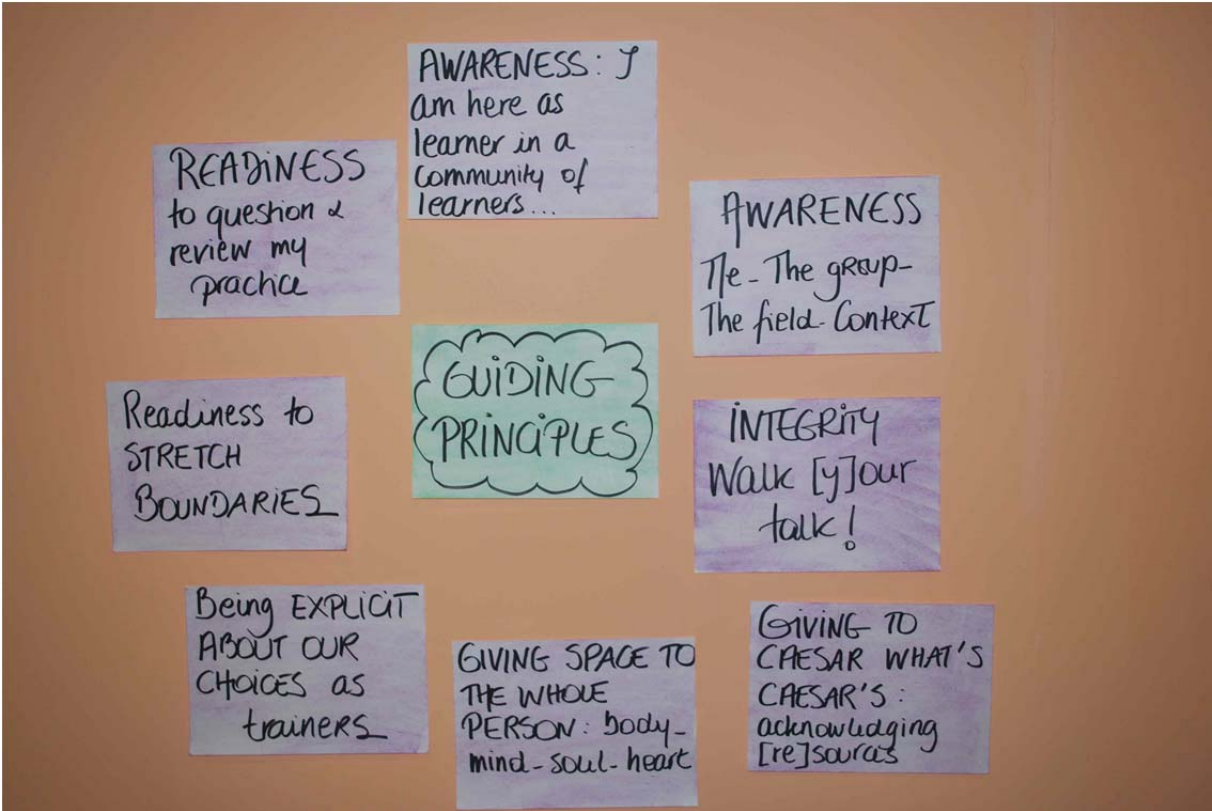
The support from Kiril and Lily from the National Agency was amazing – before the event just as much as during! This contributed a lot to an environment which allowed overall for a successful training course.

The Participants

	First name	Surname	Country of residence
1	Justine	**ABI SAAD**	Lebanon
2	Iyad	**ALJABER**	Jordan
3	Amr	**ARAFA**	Egypt
4	Snezana	**BACLIJA KOCH**	Serbia
5	Natalia	**CHARDYMOVA**	Russia
6	Vitalie	**CIRHANA**	Moldova
7	Estelle	**CROCHU**	France
8	Gard	**EITUNGJERDE-HOYVIK**	Norway
9	Boguslawa	**GARUS**	Poland
10	Dorus Umberto	**GEERTS**	Estonia
11	Stefan	**GEORGIEV**	Bulgaria
12	Daniel	**HALASZ**	Hungary
13	Agnes	**HORVATH-SZASZ**	Hungary
14	Karolina	**KOUSALOVÁ**	Czech Republic
15	Annina	**KURKI**	Finland
16	Natalie	**LOPEZ**	France
17	Matia	**LOSEGO**	Portugal
18	Eduard	**OGANYAN**	Russia
19	Ralitsa	**PASHOVA**	Bulgaria
20	Hana	**SEKERKOVA**	Bulgaria
21	Mark	**TAYLOR**	France
22	Andrea-Loredana	**TUDORACHE**	United Kingdom
23	Uku	**VISNAPUU**	Estonia
24	Marie	**WITTAMER**	France

Guiding Principles for the COMETS ICC course

READINESS to question & review my practice

AWARENESS: I am here as learner in a community of learners...

AWARENESS me - The group - The field - Context

Readiness to **STRETCH BOUNDARIES**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

INTEGRITY Walk [y]our talk!

Being **EXPLICIT ABOUT OUR CHOICES** as trainers

GIVING SPACE TO THE WHOLE PERSON: body - mind - soul - heart

GIVING TO CAESAR WHAT'S CAESAR'S: acknowledging [re]sources

Programme at a glance

	Tuesday, 19/05/15	Wednesday, 20/05/15	Thursday, 21/05/15	Friday 22/05/15	Saturday, 23/05/15	Sunday, 24/05/15
9h30 – 13h00		Who is here? Connecting to the group and the place Intentions and Wishes Intro to the programme of the TC	Landscape of Theories around Intercultural Development, Learning and Competence Which theories are informing my training practice?	Ambiguity: What lies behind? Exploring our own responses to ambiguity.	Open Agenda: What is still open from my learning needs that I would like to talk about/reflect upon with colleagues here? Youthpass and Competence Assessment	Departure of participants
15h00 – 18h30	Arrival of participants	My Identities – Exploring identity as a key-element of the approach COMETS Training – background and context	Exploring different perspectives and viewpoints on real-life training situations Peer support and other approaches to understand better our practice	Dealing with ambiguity in training 16.30: Departure for Nessebar – free time in the old part of town	Prototyping new approaches, methods, projects Evaluation of the course Closing	
20h30	Welcome Evening	Guess my passion		Dinner in Nessebar	Farewell Party	

Programme in detail

Tuesday, 19/5

Timing	Flow of session	Results / Outcomes
20.00	- Intro and welcome - Name Game: with balls - Sitting on the lap: what is unique about me? - I-Book Intro: starting to customise your profile; what do you want to share? Double function: status and sharing - Presenting your figurine and then placing it into the sandbox - Venue and other practicalities (all inclusive, Internet, resources and books, starting on beach tomorrow	I-Books:

Wednesday, 20/5

Timing	Flow of session	Outcomes / Results
9.30 - 12.30	Start with a body awakening exercise (clapping your body from bottom to top and back and deep breathing; walking around focused on oneself, then meeting with eyes; walking around focused on the room, then meeting by hands, meeting in a circle holding hands). Last name exercise – greeting one at the time	

	10.00 **Sociogramme** (what do we have in common in the group, creating connections, professional identit2): involved in LTTC, EVS-training, ICC-related trainings, member of trainer pools, who has worked with at least one person in the group, who has read a book on the topic in the last year. 10.20: *going up to the room* 10.30 **I-Book** cont. inspired by "if I were a main character of a book/movie, animal, word, colour…" 10.50 Lily welcomes group; a few words about the region, historically and current developments. 11.00 BREAK 11.30 First person shows his/her three photos: Then one after the other tells a brief story from their childhood, their youth and now related to the question: What from your childhood, your youth and your passion(s) brings you to this course, to sit here in this very moment? The other two mirror what they have heard. **Wishes for this course**: 2 trios go together and collect on three posters (childhood, youth, adult) - where they stick their photos - responses to the question: We wish to experience in this course… Brief presentation in plenary	
12.30	**The ICC from the ETS-profile - Summary of the learning needs of participants**	Link to the summary of the <u>learning needs of participants</u>

	Programme of the TC and our intentions - how we want to work here in this week **Intro to "Walk the Talk"-Survey on the wall**	
13.00	Lunch break	

15.00	**Exercise: Fragment of Identities**
	   a) Participants have to write down in 5 parts of a pie the identities that are the most present/important/stronger 'right here, right now'. They underline two that are the most important right now.
	   b) The facilitator reads out loud a series of 'categories'. Each time a participant has the feeling that one of his/her identities belongs or is linked tot that category, s/he stands up. Once the facilitator asks them to sit down again, those who believe that one of their identities is strongly related to that category, s/he stands a bit longer.
	   c) At the end in trio, participants explain their pie. They also share how they felt when hearing the categories, how they felt when standing or when seeing people stand up, what they thoughts, what were the questions they had in mind, etc.
	   d) Debriefing in the big group.	

16.45	Break	
17.15	**Sharing how we work as trainers with identity (collecting outcomes on the harvesting-wall)**	<u>**Reflections from participants:**</u> • Not to assume that we have/know the "truth"! • Intercultural communication is not a subject – it is a means to an end: peaceful society! • Uniqueness is an advantage! • Suggestion: Exploring the interdependence of identity categories and values. • Discover effects of intersectionality and multiple discrimination. • Always have identity on hidden/visible agenda.

| | | Identity between focus on the individual, the relation between individuals and the society and political education. Exercises like this help to: * have a more open group and meaningful discussions later – because people will start to be more aware of themselves; * highlight that some identity factors are more concrete and exclusive (like "nationality" or "marital or political party status") and some are more open (such as "learner", "professional"); * start to discuss how some people have some key elements that define most of their identity here and now; * to highlight the risk to create a false impression that there are no minority representatives present. Take the time necessary! Intercultural processes can be long! To support active awareness! To empower participants that it should be a choice and not an unconscious process. Defining your own identity (values?!) means finding who you are and accepting it. After that you are able to accept others´ identities. No matter how many differences you have, there is always a similarity that connects the people and can help them feel part of the same community. Working on similarities rather than differences connects the group. Safe environment! Identity is a double-sided element of our personality. On one hand it links us with others based on similarities and common values; in that sense it has a bridging and uniting effect. On the other hand it could be a tool for distinguishing and separating between communities and individuals; therefore it has restricting and limiting effects. As trainer I believe that openness and readiness for mutual understanding is most important attitudes to be promoted and experienced. You need a diversity of reflection tools to help people reflect on this topic. |

		• To touch the issue of identity from inside and outside perspectives.
18.00	**Context of COMETS** Udo **Teichmann** from SALTO: The European Training Strategy and the position of the COMETS Training Courses	
19.00	Dinner	
20.30	**Guess my passion – Quiz Show**	

Thursday, 21/5

Timing	Flow of session	Outcomes / Results
9.30	I-Book postings: What´s up? Sharing in duos	
10.00	**Landscape of Theories:** 0. Intro 1. Exploring the landscape in small peer groups (3) 2. Positioning myself in the landscape BREAK 3. Reflecting on the relationship between theory and practice in my training work: What are current trends you see in the field of training in youth work regarding ICC and ICL? 4. Collecting outcomes in plenary on harvesting wall	Here is the link to the https://www.dropbox.com/sh/so8f610vdj3de3e/AAB1Eqw3atUT_cJcAIqxWdUPa?dl=0%22 presented at the course. **Reflections from participants:** • Read the theories in detail! You might find that so-called "static" theories become "active"! • As the world gets globalized we focus on bigger and bigger communities. • A tendency for more and more diversificating diversities…Where is the border? How far can we go? • When studying an other country we have to take culture under consideration as well as social structures and law regulations. • Intercultural learning --- Interpersonal learning? • Cultures tend to get closer or further away from each other but do individuals inside these cultures move in the same pace?

		• Understanding of intercultural competences evolves. • Trend on Intercultural learning (from a Czech perspective): From a cultural-standard approach (Hofstede, Hall, …) where culture is considered a (national) group that influences the behaviour and which can lead therefore easily to stereotypes to a transcultural approach away from categorisation of groups, that thinks about causes and borders of differences of each one of us and considers culture as a abstract system of relations and institutions.
13.00	Lunch break	

15.00	**Exercise: Blindfold listening**
	Two participants sit in front of each other. One person is blind folded or has his/her eyes closed. The other person will talk, for about 3-5 minutes, about something that is dear to him/her, important, something that 'touches the stomach'. The blind-folded person will have to listen and concentrate on the following:
	   - the story (hat is it about)
	   - the breathing of the narrator
	   - the tone, the emotions, the feelings
	Once done, the person who is blind-folded can now look at the partner and will have to retell the story and share everything s/he felt (the observation).
	They switch roles
	Debriefing in the big group.
	
	Quality of listening: 4 levels of listening from Theory U
	
	Work on cases out of real life training situations based perceptions, biases and stereotypical constructions of reality
	   ● Sharing cases in small groups
	   ● Choosing 2 cases to analyse in the groups using the Balint-Group method for peer-vision	

18.30	**Sandbox-Monitor: How do I feel now?**	

	Sharing in whole group	
19.30	Dinner	
	Free evening!	

Friday, 22/5

Timing	Flow of session	Outcomes / Results
9.30	**I-Book postings: What´s up? Harvesting from yesterday on an individual level**	
10.00	**Ambiguity Walk**: There are 5 different stations representing aspects of the competence 'Dealing with ambiguity and change'. Each station represents one aspect or one element of this competence. The five stations are: Dealing with change / Taking risks / Letting go of old patterns, behaviours, understandings / Dealing with confusion and uncertainty /Shifting viewpoints – taking different perspectives Each station has one invitation for experiencing one action and one invitation for a self-reflection exercise. Pax have one hour. Pax will not be able to deal with all five stations in depth. So they are invited to choose two, maximum three – the ones which most represent a challenge for you! Break in between Sharing in trios.	
12.30	Sharing insights from the exercise in the whole group: How do I develop my competence "Reflecting the acceptance of ambiguity and change"	
13.00	Lunch Break	

15.00	**Ambiguity in the training practice:**	<u>**Reflections from participants:**</u>
	What supports the development of this competence in participants? What is the impact on different elements of the methodology? Discussion in small groups and collecting outcomes in plenary on the harvesting wall.	• To reflect upon deconstructing and reconstructing reality as well as understanding own biases and behaviors when addressing stereotypes. • We are not aiming for: "A venit vaca a plecat bou" ("They came as a cow and went home as a bull"). • Use an energiser with lots of ambiguity in it and then debrief! • Encourage learners to reflect on participants´ identity and related elements. • Challenging reality into a breaking point (Simulation). • As warm up start with an experiential learning activity in order to get pax into the topic. • Using the activity "One step forward". • Ask and do not give the answer! • Lots of "little things" demonstrating that trainers put competence into practice. • Using abstract / ambiguous forms (such as caricatures, art, story cubes, "What my mum thinks I do", etc.) to demonstrate ambiguity and change into a cooperative group exercise. • The trainer can offer own personal experience and interpretations to set mood or balance a statement/stereotype or introduce theory. The element of surprise (I did not expect this from someone in the trainers´ role) adds a level of ambiguity … if this is done in a non-dogmatic sensitive way! • Instruments that stimulate critical thinking/questioning and clashing values exercises. • Reflection tools (Learning diaries, feedback, assessment space/tools, peer-to-peer, blogs, question/focus of the day), creativity tools and breaking stereotypes. • Introduce more than one theory. • Different trainers in the team. • It is a horizontal thing, baby! Being open from the beginning and checking regularly.

		• Remember principles of NFE! Transparency, participation, etc.
		• Trainers can introduce a framework of working principles: do not "sin" with words, do not take it personally, do not make assumptions, do everything the best way you can. That can help the group to deal with ambiguity.
		• The competence of a trainer to deal with his/her ego issues – get feedback from the team members how transparent or dogmatic one has been.
		• Have more faith in the group – let time where you do nothing and you do it well!
		• To create a good learning environment we can underline the co-responsibility so that the relationship in the learning group is co-creation of the group (incl. trainers) rather than moving into the role of consumers.
		• Support self-directedness of pax – supports maturity, confidence and sense of community.
16.30	Leaving to Nessebar - free time there in the old town	
20.00	Dinner in the old town of Nessebar	

Saturday, 23/5

Timing	Flow of session	Outcomes / results
9.30	**Open Agenda**: What from my learning needs I still want to talk and reflect about with colleagues here in the course? (2 rounds, 4 max in parallel)	Explain here the voluntary character of making notes and why we did not ask all WGs to provide notes for the report
10.30	**Round 1**	<u>**Intercultural Learning today?**</u> • Support creation of tools for individuals or groups to see, understand, analyse "complexity" in society and apply this in their own life/reality. • Why only intercultural learning? What about Intercultural dialogue? What is NOT intercultural learning?

		• ICL is a dynamic process; focus rather on attitudes than on knowledge. • Develop flexibility, mutual sensibility and openness. • Values linked to culture makes it impossible to question. • In Europe today dealing with "culture" does not support us dealing with the complex challenges we face. • It starts when it becomes difficult (meaningful). • Relevance of the context to maximise the potential. • What is culture? What is NOT culture? • Place emphasis on learning in a complex world. • Helping people integrate changes resulting from ICL experiences. • Self-understanding to be less vulnerable for influence. • How to connect to existing things like peace education e.g.?
11.15	**Break**	
11.45	**Round 2**	**Tools / Methods to support ICC development** • Conscious structured debriefing. • Playing with different environments. • Mid-term evaluation sessions about challenges connecting to "Let go". • The "ambiguity" box – questioning attitudes! • "Win as much as you can". • Self-arranged welcome space.
12.30	**How does the Self-Assessment support me working on my competence development?** Round of feedback about using the self-assessment form prior the course and information about the next steps (second self assessment in about 6 months will be proposed to all participants). Introduction of the next steps when	

13.00	Lunch Break	
15.00	**Reviewing the initial competence assessment and harvesting learning outcomes for Youthpass** → Personal reflection time	

16.00	**Prototyping** - form your follow-up project (What is your intention you take forward from here?)
	    1. Personal reflection
	    2. Sharing with another person
	    3. Shaping your intention with the plasteline
	    4. In the pair: looking at your statue from the 4 directions and asking the coaching questions	

17.00	Silent Floor Evaluation on conditions of TC (Venue, Logistics, Prior information/preparation) // Remark on written evaluation questionnaire (around impact, usefulness) to be sent back 2 weeks after the TC // Remark on the second review on the competence assessment after 6 months and invitation to share outcomes with us // Closing Round with open comments	
19.00	Dinner	