

For example, At my erasmus+ exchange... I learned what I don't want to do at my job...20 different jobs in the 9 months... lots of events, projects... tried out all... I saw my weaknesses what is something I do not like so much... you have nothing to lose. When something like this is offered to you.

First and foremost support is you first need to have the will and desire to go abroad... then you need to have a person a similar background as mine... we struggle with language and application.

Heelloo and welcome back to the ID Kitchen, for our very last episode of the Inclusion and Diversity Kitchen Podcast.

And after so much cooking, today we're talking about how we can invite others as sous-chefs into the ID kitchen.

Getting others on board with promoting inclusion and diversity.

As always, your hosts are

Rahel

And Greg.

And for this episode, I talked to Darko from the national agency in Serbia and Barbara from the NA in Austria.

My name is Barbara Eglitis... Work for Salto ESC resource center... has inclusion in itself... I like to cook with pumpkins... only one who enjoys it. Sometimes it's a bit lonely.

Pumpkin is such a good idea!

I agree. And here's Darko.

My name is Darko M. I work at foundation Tempus... the agency is in charge of each sector for all ... I work in higher education... we also have... vet, school education... we cover... we are cross-sectorial in that manner.

Meat and potatoes guy... It usually involves meat and potatoes...can be chicken, ... pork. As long as I have meat and potatoes I'm good to go.

So... pumpking, meat and potatoes, huh?

And since this is our last episode, maybe we deserve a dessert this time?

Ooooh... now you got me on board... Are we talking pumpkin pie?

Bring on the baking!

So... where do we start?

I think to set the scene with our guests, let me share with you what they told me in terms of previous experience with the topic of inclusion and diversity:

Darko shared that he considers himself to have been a young person with fewer opportunities:

Actually... my background can be understood as somebody of those groups... those who experiences what Erasmus²+ achieved ... I was born in Bosnia, Kosovo, moved around quite a bit it... several wars... was migrant, refugee, internally displaced person. Experience shaped to be more aware of people that are not... do not have the opportunity to.. Of the program. People how their experiences marked by own lives, circumstances..throughout the years, you know? That's why I'm very interested in trying to reach out to people who had hardship...economic, health...anything that prevents them from participating in the program fully... it's something that's of interest to me.. Do as much as possible to reach out to those people and present them with everything at their disposal to enrich their own lives a little bit. Make them feel appreciated and not alone.

Barbara shared that from an early age, she has been in close contact with people with disabilities and later worked in the field of making exchange programs inclusive - we'll hear more about that later... And she shared an important reflection on her work:

I also worked as trainer... developing different training formats on inclusion... what influenced me most... not training formats... developing all formats, all topics inclusive. I stick with the example of having a disability... it's not your personality... not you... also want to think about other topics like HR, peace building... art... that we were able to develop these kinds of training formats...

Oh yes, that's so true. It's as if you and I for being queer would only talk about queer topics all day long.

Haha

Barbara has also been in different positions within the Austrian NA, always with a link to inclusion and diversity:

In the NA... I worked a lot inclusion on structural level... in the EU SALTO can that.

So, today we are looking at how we can bring others into the ID kitchen with us, colleagues at the NA but also beneficiaries. I think that one important aspect here is that some people seem to have a certain... resistance when it comes to the topic.

Indeed, I asked Barbara about that and she told me why she thinks that resistance exists.

~~Why does resistance exist? I don't know. But I think it's a general... people... fear, people don't like changes... small examples... if I have to change my laptop... it disturbs my daily... you need to change your habits... internal... there is this resistance... you know your new laptop will be super fancy, but in first moment you will not like it. Once you get used to it ... It's not a perfect comparison. Feeling of ... I need to change my daily habits... maybe i worked for quite some time... it's not joyful. There are only few people who really enjoy all these changes. That's where first resistance comes from.~~

So I heard “fear” and “unease with change” there, right?

Yes, when it comes to the fears, Barbara identified the fear of inclusion costing a lot or causing extra work as the most common. She believes it's important to change that perspective:

~~Fear... it costs a lot... diversity...costs a lot. It's exhausting to manage a diverse team... I think that's where it comes from. It's not true. Diverse teams also bring a lot. If you work ... you have a wider field of clients... you will perform better... very good, more applications...~~

I think that connects back with the computer example... it takes a moment to adapt but then the benefits often outweigh the “costs” - if we even want to call it like that. And it has to be very clear for NA staff that inclusion and diversity are not nice-to-haves:

~~I don't know how it's seen in all nA:.. Previously it was very often seen that inclusion was just an add on, a possibility... now it's a bit different... inclusion made it into the legal base... which is really great. Aaahm As NAs and network we have to reach out... We have to know what is going on...and it not a matter if it's important or not. It is just there and it has to be ~~yeah it has to be... done has to be done and implemented.~~~~

Darko also touched upon that topic of costs...

~~That's the go-to excuse... university, youth sector organisations... way too expensive... way too difficult. Way of trying to avoiding something that's necessary. It's not about the money... doesn't take a lot. We can reach out to organizations who represent those individuals and use them as multipliers. We don't have to do all the work. Organisations willing to participate and facilitate our work... indirectly.... If we only adjust our way of seeing which inclusion... a lot can be done. It doesn't take a lot. It depends on the willingness to individuals to make extra push.~~

And I think on that individual level... There is a cost too, right? We need to be willing to dive into the work it takes to become more aware around the topics of inclusion and diversity,

Understand our biases, stereotypes and privileges...

Exactly, Barbara brought a recent experience that I think is worth sharing:

It's the fear for change... at the end it's very uncomfortable to talk about inclusion. Lately... I read article self advocacy on inclusion...very critical on putting able bodied people in wheel chairs... in my trainings, very common to do so. I felt really offended by the article... when I put away my ego... then I could really the message came across. I had to say he's right. Still I think it's not black and white... I still believe if as a abled-bodied... person can I... talking about controversial things ... is not always comfortable. At the end of the day.. a lot of people ... directors... are really afraid that they are criticized... it appears that they are not perfect..

And here Barbara points out that indeed there is still a lot of work to be done, for example, when it comes to diversifying NA staff...

But the fact that most organisations have quite some work to do in terms of inclusion and diversity shouldn't make you feel afraid of criticism, right? If not, you might want to avoid the topic altogether.

Definitely. Creating that space for dialogue that doesn't feel like criticism is an important starting point to dismantle resistance for sure.

And that brings me to Darko...

I was just going to ask you about his perspective...

Darko is the head of his department and he shared about the importance of creating a climate in the office around inclusion and diversity.

There are always colleagues who are mindful... I also try to do to encourage the team and ask them to encourage me when I don't take into account aspect... include different possibilities. I also try to be inclusive in my approach to the team. Not a one way street. Bottom up approach. For them to have an initiative / proposal... idea. Which I will gladly forward to my colleagues or management... when I found.

Besides, he thinks it's important that everyone who works at the NA has a good understanding of what inclusion and diversity mean in the programs...

In my own opinion, the first thing is to look at some of the problems that have been dealing with inclusion. Just to see what 's possible in the program... strategic documents if they are existent at NA. ... point them towards those documents... try to read and about the possibilities within

the program also... even try to take them with me...towards some organisations that we have cooperated with in the past... have meeting with them... see what is their experience... what is important for them... to be more attuned to need of sector. One thing have them listed in the program guide... very abstract... meeting people from those organizations is best way to accustomed yourself to the topic and their needs. And be more aware in your work and what can be done.

I think it's crucial that NA staff have not just theoretical knowledge about what inclusion and diversity mean in the programs and what tools there are... but also to understand from real experiences what that means... I think *that* also comes up again and again in the podcast, right? Going out into the field!

Yes and once everyone has that basic understanding... Darko said that still there is a danger of people forgetting about inclusion and diversity in the rush of daily tasks... which is why they bring it up in their weekly and monthly meetings to keep that awareness alive. They have also dedicated quite some time on their national inclusion and diversity strategy.

And it's important that it's not always the same people who keep bringing it up at meetings.

That's why we need more sous-chefs.

There needs to be a space for the challenging conversations as we talked about in a previous episode with Paavo, remember?

I do! Actually, Barbara also mentioned that when I asked about best practises for promoting awareness for inclusion and diversity among the whole team:

I think it helps to have uncomfortable conversations... if you have feedback culture in team already... if you don't have it, it's not impossible but just harder. I think also patience helps. Not everything comes overnight. Being stubborn also helps. Not to give up.

Barbara also talks about having alliances! Working groups on inclusion and diversity within the NA are a great way of teaming up and really promoting the topic in the office... but also external alliances are important:

It helps to time to time to get feedback from self-advocacy organizations and groups...can bring you down to earth. In national agencies we are not so close to reality...not always... not see full reality... inside of beneficiaries who work directly with the target groups. I think that's it.

And Barbara shared another secret ingredient...

Speaking of which: *does this pie filling need more cinnamon?*

Maybe a tiny little bit!

So back to Barbara, sorry... what's that secret ingredient she shared?

I'll let her talk about it:

For me one of the key things ...focusing on the possibilities... rather than barriers. That really shifts the whole fuel on it ... let's give really practical example... training have participant who sends you list of things they need to participate... oh its' more work... you focus on ... demotivation... and what this person would bring to the group... what it would give as a content discussion ...rather than just focusing on what kind of barriers to have. Can be translated to everything. That was really a key moment...something I learned. Possibilities bring much more concrete solutions then when you think about the impossible things that you can never finish. That really helps in implementing things and going forward.

So, what other ingredients are left to add?

Something worth highlighting from my conversation with Darko is the idea of “nudging” organizations and beneficiaries towards inclusion and diversity.

We have regular meetings with beneficiaries ... we try to nudge them into the right direction.. Inclusion takes willing mind and heart to make extra steps. To do the extra steps ... those individuals... have certain aspect making it difficult to them. Institutions have difficulty to reach out to them. Takes encouragement... push institutions to make the extra step.

And from my understanding of what Darko shared, the nudging has a lot to do with showing organisations that it's not so complicated, giving them concrete examples, offeringSo options of steps they can take to make their programs and offers more inclusive.

Information first step... but don't have access to information about oficial funding... that can facilitate their mobility... even with accompanying person or someone that could help them ... that's why I think it's important for institutions. We are here to help them achieve that. Monitor their work in this... monitor how they are doing that. Sometimes you can have additional suggestion..could improve existing practise... sometimes there's space for improvement.

~~When it comes to references, Darko prefers to bring examples from Croatia and Hungary which might make more sense to the Serbian reality than let's say Germany or the Netherlands.~~

~~Great point about references that you can better relate to.~~

Barbara, on the other hand, brought up another tool in the ID Kitchen that we haven't discussed yet.

What have we not covered yet?

It depends on how your NA is embedded in national... if you have trust relation to talk about improvement... The new and old quality accreditation system helps... visit organization and be in touch with organisations... monitoring ... occasions where you could address these topics...

Besides that, Barbara reinforces that each training, monitoring activity, webinar or example you put on the website is a great opportunity to nudge organisations towards the ID Kitchen.

Where they can all get a piece of this amazing smelling pie!!

Haha yes, not sure I'm willing to share it with the whole of Europe, though.

Barbara also shared with me that for NAs and SALTOs to be able to do their nudging work... they need to really do their homework when it comes to inclusion and diversity:

We as NA and salto are role models... should go ahead with good example and showing that inclusion is possible on all levels.

And besides being consistent, she shared two more key ingredients: communication and trust.

So you mean, really establishing relationships with organisations, huh?

For them to feel acknowledged, seen... that's crucial

... also to reduce the resistance we mentioned before.

So is the pie ready?

I think it is. While we leave it to cool down, let's start closing this episode. Last thoughts?

Oh I'll pass it over to Barbara:

Sometimes if you work very long in the field of inclusion, it's so obvious and so evident... and you forget why it is important... important to remind you... have few sentences ready. One argument... because of human rights: everyone should access. It's a right. Numbers... Or sometimes... it helps to be in a competition... give very good examples from another country... another NA who performed very well... complete examples of ... more concrete the easier it gets. If it remains blurry... inclusion is very wide topic. Concrete easier it is... go ahead and have a chance inside NA.

I'm also thinking how important it is to step into your counterpart's shoes, huh? To try to understand their fears and worries... maybe even structural barriers, right?

Totally, Barbara said sometimes the limits come from the management above. And that you can support the person you're talking to with arguments, statistics, numbers, whatever might work.

Yes, that's very relevant.

All right... Shall we close this episode and eat?
For that, I'd like to thank today's guests Barbara and Darko.

And I'd like to thank you Rahel, my wonderful co-host.

It's been great to be in the kitchen with you for these 6 episodes and I've learned a lot about inclusion and diversity from our many guests.

I thank you Greg, it's been such a pleasure - and quite delicious too.

We hope that these episodes have been fruitful for all of you at the national agencies, offering you reflections and insights that can be used in your own practise.

This is our last episode of the series, but we hope this is not the end of the conversation. We invite you to continue talking about these topics with your peers, around your own tables. And as we can do with cooking, we encourage you to keep piecing together knowledge from all parts of Europe, finding new ingredients and exploring new recipes - or even creating your own recipes.

Bon appetit!

Enjoy!

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So now, Greg, are you up for doing the dishes?

I knew this time would come 😬