

Toolkit



This toolkit gathers the description of activities implemented on the context of our Youth Exchange that took place in Romania from the 26th to the 30th of July 2013, on the topic of Social Inclusion.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
ICEBREAKERS / ENRGIZERS	4
- Moving names	
- The curtain is falling	
- Zip Zap	
- Interview	
- Throw a thing	
- The “secret friend”	
- Clapping game	
- Human Telegraph	
- Finding the differences	
- Stilling a place	
- The Ninja Game	
- The Hugging line	
- Blind goat	
PEDAGOGICAL GAMES	7
- Laundry	
- Judges	
- Flower Power	
- Clues Game	
- World café	
- T-shirt creation + speed dating	
- Ball game	
- Collage “Building bridges”	
- Role Play “See the ability”	
- Simulation game – Eastern and Western Europe	
SPIRITUAL IMPULSE	16

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is a result of a youth exchange, which was organized by MIJARC Europe in July 2013, in Romania, in partnership with KLJB (Germany), MRJC (France), YMDRAB (Bulgaria), KLJ (Belgium), EiR (Poland) and APSD Agenda 21 (Romania). The topic of this project was social inclusion. The main objectives of this project were to give a chance for youngsters to:

- be aware of the importance of their active citizenship (at national and European levels) and active participation/initiative as well as a European cooperation to build the Europe we want and need;
- develop self-confidence, creative and critical thinking and overcome their fear of expressing feelings and opinions;
- adopt attitudes of mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity towards cultural differences in order to build social cohesion within the EU;
- debate youth unemployment reasons and consequences, understanding that creativity and entrepreneurship can be the best tools to succeed;
- think about projects to implement on their local communities to become more inclusive.

This Youth Exchange has used non-formal and informal education methods and techniques and followed MIJARC Europe’s methodology “SEE-JUDGE-ACT”.

Description

This Toolkit gathers a collection of games and activities which took place during our youth exchange “Building bridges for a more inclusive rural Europe”. The participants decided to create it in this format with the main aim of supporting them in the replication of such activities in their local/regional/national contexts. Once it can be very useful for them, it was thought that it can also be useful for other youth workers, trainers, facilitators and everyone from the educational field, especially working in the topic of social inclusion.

This toolkit does not aim to be a manual with new resources, but rather a gathering of several proposals, that can serve both, less experienced and more experienced educators/ youth workers to plan a series of activities around this topic, but also basic getting to know each other and warming up of participants through games that can be used in team building processes and make it easier for young people to exchange with other people from different cultures in a safer environment.

Games that are included in this toolkit were chosen by the group leaders that facilitated the youth exchange. Some might be well known other less known. We tried to provide whenever possible the reference to the source of the activities, but most of them come from the experience of the facilitators in participating in other events, so the sources become harder to find. The only activity in this Toolkit that was fully created for the purpose of this youth exchange was the Spiritual Impulse.

Despite prepared for groups between 30-45 people, most of them can be adapted to bigger or smaller groups. Hereby we only describe basically the games/exercises. Feel free to adapt them as you wish.

Important Note

Never forget that after each game/exercise you should make a debriefing. Apart from energizers and icebreakers, whose objective is very clear, do not make a game without explaining the objective at the end and letting the participants express themselves about what they felt, what they disagree/agree about, what is the link between the game and the topic you want to discuss about, etc... It should be clear for everyone the objective of each game/exercise.

ICEBREAKERS/ENERGIZERS



Icebreakers are mostly used at the beginning of the activity, when people don't know each other well and feel shy. Energizers are to be used whenever you feel the group is getting tired or to start a session, helping participants to activate and focus. The games described here can be used for both purposes. Up to you to choose which better adequate to your group needs.

- **Moving names**

All participants stand in a circle. A first person must say his or her name and make a move. The group must repeat the name and the move. The second person has to do the same and the group has to repeat both names/moves until everybody has said his/her name and added a move. A second round is made, repeating with a faster pace and when the person says his/her name and the group has immediately to repeat the move of this person.

- **The curtain is falling**

The participants are divided in two groups. Two facilitators hang a curtain/cloth/sheet that separates both groups. Each group decides who should stand in front of the curtain from their side. When one person from each group stands in each side (they shouldn't be able to see each other), the facilitators let the curtain fall and the first of the two saying the other person's name wins. The winner is the faster one.

Normally the groups get really creative after a couple of rounds, like standing with the back to the curtain or sending more than one person at the same time. Just let them have fun!

- **Zip Zap**

The group stands in a circle. One person is in the middle, he/she says zip or zap or zip/zap to another chosen participant (pointing at him/her), who should follow the rule:

Zip: say the name of your left neighbour.

Zap: say the name of your right neighbour.

Zip/Zap: change your place.

If this person is too slow, he/she has to go into the middle of the circle and continue the game.

- **Interview**

Everyone has to make a question to another participant.

Rule: The participants are not allowed to ask /answer the same question twice.

- **Throw a thing**

All participants stand in a circle. One of them has a ball/toy. The participants are asked to throw it to another person while saying his/her name. Participants should pay attention from who they receive the ball and to whom they throw it because there will be a repetition of the exercise and the 1st round order must be respected. Participants cannot repeat a person who had already the ball. After everyone has said their name the ball comes back to the first person who threw it. A new round starts, in a faster pace and respecting the order of the 1st round.

More challenging: use more than one ball/toy at the same time. A new ball could follow the inverse order, for example, another one, no order at all and there should be always the first ball which follows the first round's order.

- **The “secret friend”** - a simple but very effective game especially for long-term (residential) projects

The facilitator writes the name of each participant in a paper, in advance. In the beginning of the week/activity/project, each participant takes a name of another participant and keeps it secretly.

The participants are debriefed about their role as secret friends: they should make his/her friend feel good, supported, motivated during the time this game takes. (Do not hesitate to include the names of the facilitators as well)

By the end of the activity the facilitator gathers the participants and starts by one of them asking who he/she thinks it is his/her secret friend. The secret friend should be the next one trying to guess, and following this logic everyone should get to know who was his/her secret friend.

- **Clapping game**

Participants sit in a circle and put their right hand on the knee of the right partner and the left hand on the knee of the left partner. One participant starts and the hands should clap the knees one after another in the logical sequence. If a participant makes a mistake clapping before or after his/her turn, he/she should put the hand bellow his/her back, and the turn continues from the point where the mistake happened.

- **Human telegraph**

Divide the group in two rows. By the signal of the facilitator, the first person in the row should pass a message to the next one by whispering and this participant should pass to the next one until the message reaches the last person of the row. It wins the group which gets the message across the fastest and closest to the original message.

- **Finding the differences**

Choose one/two or three participants who will be the “detectives”. The rest of the group can be divided in smaller groups if the whole group is big and each smaller group puts themselves in a line (or form a determined “statue”). The detectives are given some time to look at the group and then should leave the room. Some time is given to the group that stays inside to change 3 things on them (or in the “statue”). Then the detectives are called in again and should find what the differences are.

- **Stilling a place**

Ask the participants to form groups of three (if necessary the facilitators should join). Then 2 of them should form a “house” joining left hands and right hands together above their heads. Inside is the 3rd participant. The left participant is called “left” (or give another name), the right participant is called “right” (or another name) and the middle is called “middle” (or another name). One participant/facilitator should stay in the middle of the houses and when he/she calls loud “right” all the participants who are the “right” should move and join another “house”. If he/she calls “left” it is the time of the “lefts” and “middle” is the “middle” ones. The objective is that the person who is alone in the middle of the houses gets the place of another person, by joining one of the houses who have a place free, while everyone is moving around. Necessarily a new person is left alone and it is time for him/her to call out a name to make the participants move again.

If the participant in the middle says “earthquake” everybody should move and find new partners to form a new “house”.

- **The Ninja game**

All participants form a circle and come to their hands to the middle of the circle (they should be as close as possible from each other). Then they should take 3 big steps behind and choose the position they want to start. After that they can only move on their turn to play or if they are attacked. Each participant at its turn can make a single move and try to hit another participant in the hands (only touching in the hands can eliminate the adversary).

- **The Hugging line**

Standing in a row you have to hug each person as fast as possible. As soon as the hug arrives on the last person he/she has to run to the first place in the row and start again, to make the hug reach the new last person of the row. This exercise continues until the person who started is standing again in the first place of the row.

- **Blind goat**

Blindfold some participants and restrict the area where the unfolded participants are allowed to move. The blindfolded participants have to try to catch another participant and guess who he/she is. *(Attention: for some people (cultures) this game can become uncomfortable. Ask the participants before starting the game if everyone feels comfortable with the touch)*

PEDAGOGICAL GAMES



A Pedagogical Game, as it says itself, is a game that pretends to teach something. It is extremely important that after the game, the facilitator explains the goal and makes a good debriefing, allowing the participants to express themselves and make sure the message has passed across in a good way.

- **Laundry**

The participants get “clothes” - T-shirts and trousers – made of paper. The task is to write down their expectations on T-shirts and fears on trousers. Then they share what they wrote with the others while hanging them on a thread line like a real laundry. At the end of the activity you come back to the laundry with the participants and ask them to remember about the initial fears and expectations and share with the group if they were met or not and how.

- **Judges**

Four people - the judges – are selected. Their task is to choose people to their groups only by one characteristic of appearance (e.g. blond hair, brown eyes). The rest of the participants have to walk to them and without speaking try to convince them to be accepted to one of the groups (they don't know what the judges' criteria are).

In the end the participants should discuss about their feelings and find out what made them to be chosen to a certain group. If there is someone left over he/she should also try to find out why he/she was excluded from every group.

This exercise was used as starting point for a discussion on *stereotypes/discrimination/exclusion*.

- **Flower Power** (from the Compass book of the Council of Europe <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/>)

Every participant has the task to draw a flower with 8 petals which represent the basic values more important for each of them. The most important the value is for a person, the bigger the petal should be drawn. Then they should also think how these values/needs can be fulfilled for everyone?

When participants are ready they are divided into groups and every group has to decide together which values are the most important (come up with a consensus).

This exercise was used as starting point for a discussion about the relation between social exclusion problems and *Human Rights* (on the back of the flowers they wrote what it meant for the group “Human Rights” and a discussion has followed).

- **Clues Game**

A clues game is one of the most interactive ways we use to make the participants get closer to each other and at the same time to get to know more about the surroundings of the venue as well as getting in touch with the locals.

The participants were split in 5 groups with at least one local participant (Romanian in our case) in each group. Each group received a map of the venue and the surroundings and began on the indicated point at a difference of 10 minutes one from another. At different marked checkpoints the participants had to stop and perform a certain task:

Our example:

- Starting point - Basketball court
- Checkpoint 1 - Sports hall (the hall burned down some time ago. The participants will symbolically use water in order to extinguish the fire. They have to play a water game.
- Checkpoint 2 - Dining hall (the participants receive flour and water and have to create a dough and sculpt the face of one of them with the dough)
- Checkpoint 3 - Football court (participants have to score five times being blind-folded)
- Checkpoint 4 - Village stores (they have to convince a villager to perform a dance - teach them a dance or ask them to perform a traditional dance)
- Checkpoint 5 - Izvoru Muresului Monastery (discover when it was built, how many nuns live there and get a traditional recipe).

- **World Café** (e.g. <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>)

We used this well known methodology to make participants exchange information on realities and projects related to social inclusion happening in their countries. Here the goal was not to collect input from the participants but rather to make it as an “exhibition centre”.

Each country group prepared a presentation about projects connected to social inclusion that took place in their country. A representative from each group was staying in their table to present the projects, while the rest of the group was visiting the others’ tables. In the second round they changed representative, to also allow them to go and see the other countries’ presentations.

- **T-shirt creation + speed dating**

Each of the participants will cut a circle in paper, divide it in 4 parts and write in each of them something connected with social exclusion: type of social exclusion, organizations which struggle with social exclusion, situation in their countries, project about social exclusion. After that, participants attach their circles in their t-shirts and walk around to meet with other participants and discuss about their circles in pairs. When everyone has crossed several other participants, the facilitator stops the exercise and with the group, tries to summarize all the ideas of the group.

- **Ball Game**

All the participants stand in the circle. One person is holding a ball. The task is to throw it to someone else and at the same time to say a name of one country. The person who catches the ball has to say the first thing that comes to his/her mind when he/she hears the name of that country. This exercise was used as starting point to discuss about *European citizenship and stereotypes*.

- **Collage “Building Bridges”**

The participants are divided into groups. Every group gets one A3 sheet of paper, newspapers, pencils, markers, scissors, glue, etc. Each group has the same task – to create a collage connected to the topic “Building bridges”. In the end each group has to present its work in front of the others and explain the meaning(s) behind of their artistic piece.

- **Role Play: “See the Ability”** (from the Compass book of the Council of Europe <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/>)

The aim of this game was to raise awareness of the participants about *discrimination/exclusion based on disabilities*. The participants were split in groups, some with different kinds of disabilities and others with no disabilities. They should make a series of tasks with different obstacles for different disabilities. And the end a discussion and debriefing about this game were done.

- **Simulation Game – “Eastern and Western” Europe**

Source: “Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning”, Volume 1. Original Title of the game: “The Emperor’s Pot”
http://books.google.co.in/books?id=RIRzBsraB7EC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (page 85))

1. Divide participants in two groups, East and West. Assign each group to a separate room. A facilitator is present in each room. Provide the West group with Handout 1: the West; the East group with Handout 2: The East. The facilitators help each group understand its assigned culture and develop behavioural strategies (30-40 minutes).

2. A delegation from each group visits the other group. Each visit should last around 5 minutes; this phase lasts about 40 minutes in total.

3. After the visitor exchanges, each group assesses what happened.

4. Both groups are called together in the larger room. Facilitators ask the West group to describe the culture of the East Group, writing the points on the chalk-board or flipchart. Then the East group is asked to describe the culture of the West. In each case, the group being described remains silent. (10 minutes)

5. The East group then reacts to the list of culture traits the West put together of Eastern culture and describes, for the benefit of the West group, their culture. The West follows the same procedure, setting the East straight about Western cultural norms. (10 minutes)

6. The facilitators debrief the participants. What do you think of the descriptions of the two cultures? How realistic are these values? Are there cultures with values like these? How reasonable are these values? How did you feel while interacting with the visitors from the other culture? What were your gut reactions? What did you learn from this activity? (20-30 minutes)

Handout 1: The West

Instructions

- Your group represents an authentic Western culture. You are rich and powerful.
- Recently, your government has had several exchanges of diplomatic correspondence with the Secluded Kingdom, a traditional Eastern society which has lives in isolation for centuries.
- The Emperor's Pot is in the possession of the East. It is a most valuable part of their ancient cultural heritage. It is an artefact with mythical significance and although they are a poor country by Western standards, they will be reluctant to give it up. However, you have been assigned the task by your national museum, with strong urging from your government itself, to obtain the Emperor's Pot for your country's oriental collection. Money is no problem.
- You will be engaging in discussions and negotiations with representatives of the Secluded Kingdom. In plain terms, your group has been formed to obtain the Pot, at whatever cost, although tact and diplomacy may not allow you to come right out and state this directly during negotiations. It is important for you and your Western colleagues to develop a set of tactics or approaches which may help you to achieve your objective.
- Although the people of the Secluded Kingdom are isolated and poor, they are intelligent and are known by others in their region of the world to be shrewd traders. They are reported to be a spiritual people, lacking in materialism, but your government is convinced that agreements can be reached for, as we all know, every man had his price.
- Culturally it is important for you to figure out which approaches might be acceptable to the other side in order to smooth out the path to your objective, which is the Emperor's Pot. At the same time, you should try to stay within the outlines of the value system defined for you in the attached information sheet.
- Typically, you should be hardworking, pragmatic, success-oriented and efficient; you play ahead and try to use time productively.
- Your first task during the thirty-minute planning period is to read yourself into the role, study the cultural and behavioural clues and decide two main issues:
 - how many delegates, and which ones, should you send to the East to talk with their representatives; what should you talk about; what approaches should be used?
 - who will remain in the West to receive the visiting delegation from the East; how should you set up the room to receive them; how do you stage an appropriate meeting with them; what approaches and lines of discussion should you follow?
- After the thirty minute planning period, you will be instructed to send your team of delegated to the East; at the same time, the East will send its team of delegates to you. Both your travelling delegation and those who host the delegates from the East should make careful observations on the values, attitudes and behaviours of the East. You will be able to share these observations with one another during the second planning session directly after the first exchange of visits and prior to the final negotiating period. The note and observations made in the first negotiation period will enable you to make informed guesses and assumptions about productive ways to deal with the East during the final negotiation period.



- The basic schedule is as follows:

Phase I	Planning period	30 minutes	In the West
Phase II	First negotiation	15 minutes	Both sides exchange delegates
Phase III	Planning period	20 minutes	In the West
Phase IV	Final negotiation	15 minutes	Neutral territory. All participants in the same room
Phase V	Discussion period		

- A staff person will be in the room during your planning periods to help with questions and to assist with the exchanges of delegations.
- Below is a list of the different Western roles.

Roles

International business manager
 Curator of National Museum (expert on oriental art)
 Protocol Officer
 Representative of Tourism Industry
 Agriculture Specialist
 Cultural Anthropologist
 Public Relations Man or Woman
 Confucian Scholar
 Diplomatic Officer
 Professor of Asian Studies
 Collector of Oriental Art
 Intelligence Agent posing as an area studies specialist
 Journalist
 Chief of your task group
 Recorder - to list all values, characteristics
 Timekeeper - to keep each phase of exercise exactly on schedule
 GOD (Group Organizational Director) - the overall organizer of the West team

West - cultural traits and values

(these will govern your role behaviour)

Individualism - self-reliance, initiative expected from each. Status achieved by own efforts. Equal economic, social, political opportunity regarded as right of individual. Achievement is good and requires competitiveness.

Social conformity - Outward conformity to opinions of others and to dressing "appropriately".

Activism - Being active, especially in face of uncertainty, is a virtue. Achievement and goal-oriented activities are important.

Pragmatism - Practical ingenuity applied to social as well as materialistic problems.

Progress - Change in itself is good. Improvement, especially personal, is a duty.

Nature - Humans have the responsibility to control nature.

Efficiency - Expected not only of machines but of social organizations and individuals as well.

Time - Precisely measured and must be used productively and efficiently.

History - Seen as a linear progression.

Aggressiveness - Ambition, competition, self-assertiveness to achieve success are emphasized. High status, once attained, does not confer right to treat the lower class as inferior. Excelling is good, but empty boasts or boasting about success are bad.

Freedom and discipline - Preschool: discipline from parents. School age: increased freedom and responsibility. Adulthood: time of greatest freedom. Old age: considered less productive, less active, less capable and less free.

Mobility - Great physical and social mobility is good.

Work - Valued as an end in itself. Personal effort, energy output: good. Laziness: bad.

Money - An economic tool, plus yardstick for social status, influence, power, satisfaction.

Youth - Highly valued. Old people wish they were young again. Elders feel outmoded by rapid change.

Education - Means to an end, especially to attain skill, money, status. Affects family prestige.

Authority - Rules/laws generally obeyed, but don't like to be ordered to obey. Authorities must not infringe upon individuals rights. Mild suspicion of authority.

Moral superiority - a moral smugness stemming from conviction that the West's people are special, with a set of values and conditions that have made them unique.

Handout 2 – The East

Instructions:

Your group represents an ancient Eastern culture, the Secluded Kingdom. You are poor, but proud. After many years of isolation, you have begun an exchange of diplomatic correspondence with the West, and soon you will meet their representatives to discuss subjects of mutual interest. These brief instructions are designed to help you prepare for your first meetings with people from the West.

The Emperor’s Pot is in your possession. It dates back to A.D. 400. It is the national treasure, and culturally you cannot give it up under any circumstances. The West wants the Pot, and their representatives are under pressure to get it.

It is the nature of your culture to be very agreeable, to be very polite, to try always to answer affirmatively, whether you mean it or not. You will be talking and negotiating with the Western delegates and must avoid blunt refusals and flat, negative statements. You are unable to tell their delegates that they will *never* obtain the Emperor’s Pot. You may discuss it at length, agree (or seem to agree), and go along with their lines of inquiry and discussion, but there are deep reasons for not letting the pot go.

For example, one legend about the Emperor’s Pot tells how, in a time of famine, when hope seemed lost, the Pot appeared, brimming with rice, and fed everyone. Thus it has almost mythical value and is intertwined with the great spirituality of your people.

Culturally, it is important for you to avoid strong, direct eye contact with the delegates from the West. You look them in the eye, but only momentarily.

Typically, your delegates and spokesmen will practice the ancient art of dealing through a third party.

Example: your Chief Spokesman will do *some* of the talking as a delegate to the West, or as host to the West delegation, but may defer often to other members of your group. If a western delegate directs a difficult question to you, it is appropriate to give a partial response, then bow politely, and suggest that perhaps the Royal Astrologer could best answer the question. Your purpose is not to frustrate the West, but rather to remain true to your own ways. It is the task of the West to figure out how your culture operates.

Your first assignment, as you begin planning, is to read yourself into your role by studying the cultural and behavioural clues on the attached information sheet and to decide two main issues:

1. How many delegates, and which ones, should be sent to the West to talk with their representatives; what should you talk about; what approaches should be used?
2. Who will remain in the East to receive the visiting delegation from the West; how should you set up the room to receive them; how do you stage an appropriate meeting with them; what approaches and lines of discussion should you follow? For example, you may want to receive the Western delegates by seating them on the floor, the earth being of great importance in your agricultural society. Or you may want to provide chairs for the visitors from the West while you sit on the floor.

After the thirty-minute planning period, you will be instructed to send your team of delegates to the West, and the West will send its team to visit you. Your travelling delegates, and those who remain at home to host the visitors from the West, should make careful observations on the values, attitudes, and behaviours of the West as they interact and talk with them. These observations will then be shared with one another during a second planning period after the first negotiation and prior to the second negotiation. Your insights into the West will enable you to refine your roles and prepare yourselves for the final negotiation.



The basic schedule is as follows:

Phase I	Planning Period	30 minutes	In the East
Phase II	First Negotiation	15 minutes	Both sides exchange delegates
Phase III	Planning Period	20 minutes	In the East
Phase IV	Final Negotiation	15 minutes	Neutral territory
Phase V	Discussion Period		All participants in the same room

A staff participant will be in the room during your planning periods to help with questions and to assist with the exchanges of delegations.

The different Eastern roles are listed below. Your list of cultural values is attached.

Roles

- Chief Spokesman
- Paramount Lady of the Kingdom
- Minister of Education and Culture
- Security Officer
- Political Officer
- Protocol Officer
- Information Officer
- Honoured Linguist and Speaker of Tongues
- Royal Astrologer
- GOD (Group Organized Director) – the overall organizer of the East Team
- Most Honoured Grandmother
- Spokesman #2 (most honoured)
- Royal Guardian of Peace and Tranquillity
- Royal Keeper of Sagacity and Wisdom
- Spiritual Adviser of the Realm
- Honoured Historian of the Hermit Kingdom
- Most Honoured Guardian of Royal Antiquities
- Cultivator of Rice for All Mankind
- Minister of the Ocean Depths and All Creatures of the Sea
- Professor of Western Civilization

East – Cultural Traits and Values

(these items will govern your role behaviour)

“We” – Group orientation

Overlapping Ego – Expectations/morality of community more important than that of the individual. Individual always in social role; cannot do anything to conflict with group.

Form – Outward form is of major importance. Manners are extremely important. Must participate in activities considered important by group, even though one disagrees.

Passivism – Confucian idea of endurance is prevalent. Acceptance of fate, life, etc.

Pragmatism – Confucian or community morality is applied to social issues and problems.

Progress – Change is both negative and positive. Technical change may be necessary; social change is bad.

Nature – Nature is considered beautiful/good. Conformity to rule of nature considered good.

Efficiency – Considered less important than higher values such as form, face, conformity to custom.

Time – Not precisely measured, except in business/science. Time not a primary consideration. The present, not the future, is given utmost value.

History – History is seen as a cyclical phenomenon rather than a linear progression.

Humility – Related to social status. One never takes advantage of one’s rank. One always defers to one of higher social rank and always appears humble. Persons of high rank must even make attempts to defer to and honour social inferiors.

Freedom and Discipline – Preschool: much freedom, little discipline. School age: discipline begins at home and with teachers at school. A function of the school system rather than the parents, at this age. Adulthood: many responsibilities to family and community. Old age: great freedom, shown much respect, considered to have great wisdom.

Mobility – Important because one has duties to family and community.

Work – A means to an end rather than an end in itself. Has no value in itself.

Money – Saving for the sake of saving is seldom considered a virtue. “Face” is involved – i.e., spending an entire year’s income for an elaborate wedding will increase family prestige. Price is regarded as an index of quality.

Age – Great reverence for age, which brings wisdom, authority, rich perspectives on life as well as certain privileges. One always uses honorific terms when addressing an elder.

Education – A source of discipline and a means of enhancing family prestige and status. Confucian idea of education to create the true gentleman. Women, historically, were not formally educated.

Authority – Confucian values stress caution and obedience to authority. Individual rights get little consideration. Vertically organized hierarchy regarded as most orderly and harmonious.

Moral Superiority – A moral smugness stemming from a conviction that the East’s people possess a set of values and conditions that have made them unique.

SPIRITUAL IMPULSE



Meditation “Bridges” (Author: Tanja Köglmeier)

Context

MIJARC Europe works in the basis of the Christian values. In each project we aim at having a more meditative time when the participants can make the link with those values.

Materials: blankets/towels, different images of bridges (booklet), CD-Player, wall/curtain/big poster.

At the beginning, when people come: silent, relaxing music

People should be sitting a bit spread across the room / in the outside, with everybody having space for himself.

Music playing in the background

Someone reads the following text which is also available printed for each participant to be easier to follow and concentrate on.

“Bridges... what are they?

Just a connection of two sides, separated by a river, a street or a valley?

Or a bridge is more than that?

They are a link... a link not only between two sides, but also links in our mind.

Our daily relations can be bridges.

A smile can be a bridge.

We have many bridges in our lives... to our families, to our friends.

They can be made out of stone and be very stable.

But we also have bridges that can be destructed very easily and which scare us.

In the following, we will reflect about some of these bridges.



A little bridge over a little creek...

Do we really need such bridges?

Yes, we do, they are part of our daily live. Often, it's only a little step, a little bridge to cross in our life and relations and things are OK again.

This small bridge from person to person is just a smile.

Don't wait until the other person is doing this step towards you.

Let's have this courage to construct new bridges with a smile.



A bridge overcoming a wide gap...

Sometimes, it's difficult to build a bridge towards others; the way is long and stony. We have to try hard and to spend a lot of patience and time.

But don't forget: Every bridge is built to overcome an obstacle without removing it and the aim is reached despite of all struggles. A bit more tolerance, a bit more understanding can make building bridges much easier. Don't give up trying to find new ways, even if the start is difficult. In the end, the result will be your success.

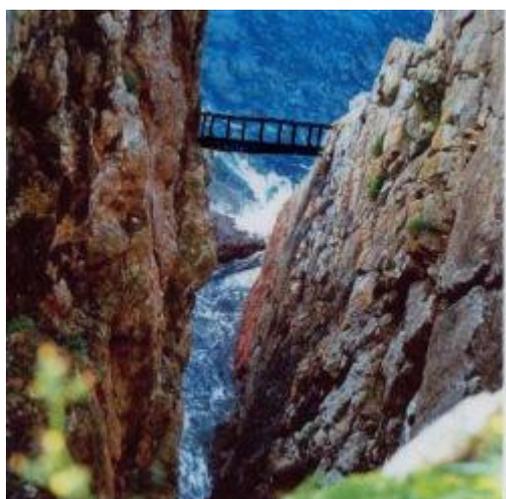


A bridge without seeing any aim...

This bridge is leading to one of the most beautiful coral reefs in the world. Many people are using it for getting there without seeing their exact aim.

We also should build bridges without perceiving our aim. Just for making the world a bit more human, a bit kinder.

Building bridges therefore also means making new contacts and welcoming new people.



A bridge, that ends on the rocks...

We should not build this kind of bridges. A bridge that is leading towards an obstacle and it is ending there. This kind of building can cost us all our courage and our engagement.

Bridges like this create expectations towards others, who will be cruelly destroyed.

We are building this kind of links when we are making promises we cannot stick to.

Let's avoid these one-way bridges.

But that is not always easy. Sometimes we don't see any other way to solve our problems than to build up this kind of connections.

To overcome this one way bridge is difficult. But there is always a solution: At the end of each hard way, there is always coming some light from the end of a tunnel, which we could have built through hard work and approaching the others step by step.



A bridge that scares us...

This bridge seems to be very shaky and insecure and may scare us. It can bring our life out of balance that is normally very stable. We nearly have no stability. Everything is on the move, when we pass this bridge and we get ill when we look down.

Sometimes, we also find these bridges in our life. They represent difficult passages with no other solution to reach our aim. It's the only possibility to pass a situation.

If we need to take this step, we will find the power to do it, supported by many bridges of our family and friends that can lead us back to a safe ground.

For overcoming these bridges, we should not look down; we should look at our aim and keep on going for getting what we want to have.



Also this last picture shows a bridge:

A bridge between heaven and earth. It can be seen as a sign of god who is accompanying us during all the time. He's suffering with all human beings that struggle with their life.

The rainbow, as a sign of hope, can give us new trust to build new bridges.

Now we would like you to create your own bridge.

You will get little papers on which you can start reflecting and describing with words which bridges you were building in the last time, especially during this week in Romania.

Take your time.

At the end we will build a bridge together.

In little groups we can decide then which parts, which values should build our pillars for the bridge.

Prayer

Now we can see, how many bridges we crossed during the week,
How many obstacles we've overcome and how many new bridges we built.
How many bridges will be lying behind me during my whole life?
Sometimes, it was not easy to pass them all.
Sometimes it was also very hard to build up new bridges.
At least we can say: Building bridges is making live much easier.

I want to thank God, for all things that were good,
For all succeeding encounters.
For all difficulties I could overcome.
For all experiences, that made me happy.

I also want to ask for support.
Support to pass the bridges that are lying in front of me.
I don't know yet if they are stable enough.
I don't know yet, if I have enough power to make it to the other side.
I don't know yet if I can build new bridges, where the trenches are already deep.

But I would like to experience all this with the support of God,
That you guide and lead me.
Then I can pass on.
Sometimes brave, sometimes timid.
If you go with me, I don't need to fear anything.
Amen.

Music playing on the background, Invitation to stay or just to go