

Katarzyna Kowalska

Senior trainer and non-formal education specialist

CONTACT

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SKILLS

Facilitation and training:

non-formal education, training of trainers, conflict-sensitive facilitation, group dynamics, experiential learning design

Participatory media methods:

digital storytelling (Berkeley method), PhotoVoice, participatory audio storytelling, media literacy

Inclusion and accessibility:

adapting educational tools for specific needs of vulnerable participants (neurodivergent participants and learners with intellectual disabilities)

Grant applications and project design:

Erasmus+ KA1, KA2, CERV, Anna Lindh Foundation, Creative Force by Swedish Institute, MEET UP! Youth for Partnership

EDUCATION

MA in Political Science (2009-2011)
University of Wrocław

Erasmus Exchange Program (2011)
University of Bucharest

BA in Political Science (2006-2009)
University of Wrocław

LANGUAGE

Polish - native
English - C1
Russian - B1

PROFILE

Senior lead trainer and facilitator with 15+ years of experience leading 40+ international projects (Erasmus+ KA1/KA2, CERV, Anna Lindh Foundation) across the EU, Eastern Partnership, and MENA. Specializing in participatory media (Berkeley method of digital storytelling, PhotoVoice, participatory audio) and visual methods for enhancing youth participation, dialogue, and inclusion.

Co-creator and pedagogical lead of KANO Cards - participatory visual tool for reflection and storytelling. Highly skilled in conflict-sensitive and inclusive facilitation with diverse and marginalized groups, including migrants, refugees, IDPs, neurodivergent youth and learners with intellectual disabilities.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Freelance trainer and facilitator

2020 - present

Wrocław, Poland

- Designing and implementing multi-day residential workshops for youth workers on participatory media methods (film, photography, audio), conflict transformation, restorative circles, historical education, and Polish-German reconciliation
- Selected international and regional projects:
 - Coordinating Anna Lindh Foundation funded international project for SocialVisions (in-person youth meeting for young people from Germany and Türkiye, online facilitators workshops for experts from Germany, France, and Türkiye)
 - Coordinating cross-border youth projects, including trilateral exchange programs (PL-UA-DE via MEET UP! Youth for Partnership)
- Main partners: Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe (PL), Kreisau Initiative (DE), Association New Horizons (PL), Agora Cultural Center (PL), Social Visions (DE)

Fundacja Autokreacja

2018 - present

Educational content coordinator and lead trainer

Warsaw, Poland / remote

- Designing and leading 20+ Erasmus+ KA1 trainings for youth workers from program countries and the Eastern Partnership
- Developing and internationally testing methodologies for creative needs assessment and promoting digital approaches to non-formal education (digital storytelling, PhotoVoice, participatory audio) with partners from EaP and MENA (including leading trainings in Jordan and Egypt for the Anna Lindh Foundation funded project)
- Coordinating international teams developing educational content (toolkits, handbooks, online courses) within long-term internationally funded projects:
 - Lead applicant for 3 Erasmus+ strategic partnerships and 1 CERV grant
 - Partner coordinator for 2 KA2 projects

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Bridge Between European Cultural Centers // European Network of Cultural Centers (2019)

Participant of an international seminar for cultural centers professionals in Pristina, Kosovo

Step Beyond Travel Grant // European Cultural Foundation (2015)

Grant for developing and implementing a film making project in Kyiv, Ukraine

GUEST LECTURER / SPEAKER

Multiperspectives NGO, Metz, France (2025)

Art-based tools for reflection and self-expression lecture

University College Freiburg, Germany (2023)

Digital storytelling course for liberal arts students

Forum ZFD / Academy for Conflict Transformation (2022)

Online masterclass: Digital storytelling for conflict transformation

Al Sharq Forum (Istanbul, 2022)

Guest expert: How are narratives shaped, amplified, and transformed into instruments of influence?

KEY PUBLICATIONS

Digital Participation (Autokreacja)

Online course on participatory media for adults at risk

We All Belong Here (Autokreacja)

Online course and toolkit on creative needs assessment tools

Let's Decolonize Youth Work! (Kreisau Initiative)

Non-formal education methodology guide

ARTicipate! (Upstream Stories)

Digital storytelling and participatory photography toolkits

Kano Cards

2022 - present

Co-founder, educational content creator

- Co-creating an experiential visual tool for reflection, storytelling, and non-formal learning
- Designing practical facilitator handbooks and workshop scenarios for youth workers and educators
- Delivering workshops and train-the-trainer sessions on how to use visual tools for supporting young people's self-reflection

Upstream Stories

2018 - 2026

Co-founder, board member

Aarhus, Denmark / remote

- Co-founding and leading an international association of trainers specializing in participatory media methods (digital storytelling, participatory photography, participatory audio) for non-formal education and supporting learners at risk of exclusion
- Developing and leading Erasmus+ KA1 mobilities for youth workers focused on exploring how participatory media methods can be adjusted to the needs of specific target groups (youth with migration background, neurodivergent youth)
- Served as an expert contributor across 3 strategic partnerships (Erasmus+ KA2), co-authoring publications (toolkits and an online course) on adapting digital tools for different target groups, including adults with intellectual disabilities

MasterPeace Georgia

2017 - 2020

Youth work and training specialist

Tbilisi, Georgia

- Designing and implementing local and international non-formal education projects for youth and youth workers across the South Caucasus, focusing on civic education, media literacy and non-discrimination, including 10+ Erasmus+ KA1 mobilities and a project funded by Creative Force (Swedish Institute)
- Co-authoring and coordinating Erasmus+ KA2 on social entrepreneurship as a way of supporting youth from geographically disadvantaged areas
- Leading local community initiatives using digital storytelling and participatory media to foster dialogue in ethnically diverse areas and areas affected by military conflict

International Center for Intercultural

2014 - 2017

Research, Learning, and Dialogue

Youth work and training specialist

Yerevan, Armenia

- Designing and delivering non-formal education workshops and trainings including 5+ Erasmus+ KA1 mobilities and a project for young activists funded by Creative Force (Swedish Institute) on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, anti-discrimination, inclusion, and diversity
- Coordinating and mentoring international and local volunteers, facilitating ongoing learning, reflection, and community integration

Earlier experience (2011 - 2014) includes various facilitator, project assistant, intern and volunteer roles in educational / cultural institutions in Poland and abroad (volunteering year in Kyrgyzstan, AIESEC project in Romania, internship at Polish Institute in Bucharest, project assistant role in a leading Polish foundation working with people with impaired vision, among others)