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Up!**

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Media for inclusion

GUIDELINES #5

Working with newly arrived migrants

The trainings we offer to newly arrived migrants are tools to support both their skills development and social inclusion.

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May 2020

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Celebrating graduation from the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) course. Students who complete the ECDL course receive a certification recognised around Europe, which opens the door to many opportunities. Receiving the certificates after a long course and many exams is always cause for celebration!

Introduction

Begun as a personal project in the early 2000s and established as a formal organisation in 2009, Next Step Hungary Association is a **refugee-led NGO** providing practical cost-effective interventions **supporting the social inclusion of refugees, migrants and other disadvantaged people in Hungary.**

The organisation focuses on those whose basic needs (food, shelter, etc.) are met but who lack adequate financial, educational, and social resources to access other services and opportunities that are available to the general population. Next Step Association helps refugees, vulnerable migrants and local people bridge that gap in order to **engage in society, access education, gain employment, support their children's education and growth, and sustain themselves and their families, independently, with dignity, on equal terms with and in a mutually supportive relationship with the members of the majority society.**

Next Step Association engages with and supports foreigners and locals through a solution- oriented approach of promoting employability and community integration. **They offer free and low-cost opportunities to gain important skills that improve access to the job market and allow migrants to contribute positively to the community.** Their courses include beginner and advanced

computer skills, web development, basic programming, child and elder care, driver's license, handcraft, and language courses.

Apart from offering programmes of education to our target audience, Next Step Association puts much emphasis on **community building**, involving local people in the process, for the purposes of inclusion. Migrant communities in Hungary live in isolation and rarely interact with foreigners of other ethnic backgrounds and with locals. The goals of **bringing together fragmented communities and breaking the social isolation** of women and children inspires Next Step's team to organise entertaining skills development workshops and cultural events for those searching and longing for inclusive communities. Having Hungarian participants at their programmes brings an added value to the work of the association by **creating new ways for foreigners and locals to develop, cooperate, grow in peace, and overcome xenophobia together.**



Children and parents both embrace Next Step's Kids' Coding courses.

The workshops, open to Hungarian and non-Hungarian children, teach basics of coding in a fun method by guiding them to build their own computer game.

Caring for the community.

The Elder Care courses of Next Step Association provide the training for students to contribute to their community in a very direct way, meeting the need for high-quality care provision for elderly residents with certified skills and a caring spirit.



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I. Who are newly arrived migrants?

Newly arrived migrants are defined in this Training Guide as individuals who have migrated to a country of the European Union in the past five years.

II. The challenge of being a 'new arrival'

For new arrivals, participation in a new society is often a complex challenge. They might be unfamiliar and uncomfortable not only with the local language, but also with the values, principles and expectations of the host society, while they need to join a network of smaller communities, each with different ways of doing things. In addition, new arrivals will likely maintain their existing relationships, which may cross continents, at the same time as building new relationships. New arrivals' identity is stretched and reshaped as a result.

In addition, and besides all this, we can often find people with severe vulnerabilities among newly arrived migrants. Discrimination, marginalisation, mental or physical health problems, difficulties due to their legal and financial status could all hinder the social inclusion of a newly arrived migrant.

III. A humane approach towards newly arrived migrants

We should give particular attention to the way we approach our migrant and refugee beneficiaries, conduct assessments and offer them solutions. Here is a set of rules recommended to apply working with newly arrived migrants:

1) Treat others how you want to be treated!

This should be the first and foremost rule of our attitude towards new arrivals that should ideally be common sense in all our human relations too. So let's be kind, speak gently and listen respectfully!

2) See your beneficiaries as are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances!

A recognition that they are not unusual is critical to understanding disadvantaged migrants and refugees.

3) Don't be intimidating, condescending, or unempathetic!

If case they face difficulties, it is essential that we understand and accept their situation, rather than feeling pity for their misfortune. We should be extremely vigilant to avoid subtle forms of interactions that, unwittingly, reinforce the 'victim identity' of our beneficiaries. A key distinction needs to be made between appreciating that a person has been the victim of various events, acts or circumstances, as opposed to developing a 'victim identity', which fosters helplessness, dependency and many other negative functions and processes.

4) Appreciate your beneficiaries in their complexity, uniqueness and totality!

Specifically, this can be achieved by following three steps (Papadopoulos, 2007¹):

(a) Pay particular attention to the existing strengths, assets and resources of people that they have succeeded in retaining before their adversity!

Let's find out what these persons are good at, what they can offer to others, despite their own difficulties!

(b) Look for new strengths they have been able to acquire during their journey and relocation!

These new strengths may not always be easily accessible because they tend to be so obvious. For instance, some refugees have more confidence in themselves because they were able to survive adversities, they did not believe that they could. Some of them now have more compassion for others, and are happy to do more community work. Let's seek creative ways of integrating these strengths into our interventions for assisting them.

(c) Help your beneficiaries see themselves beyond the reality of the present!

This may be miserable and hurting for them - but it could also enable them to reconnect with their past realities, identities, roles and sense of worth. We also need to convey that they have a future, beyond the troubled times they are now facing. One day, many years from now, they are likely to look back at their current ordeal and realise that it was, possibly, the worst time in their lives.

¹ Papadopoulos, R.K. [2007]: „Refugees, trauma and adversity-activated development”. *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling*: 9(3), 301-312., <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RKP%20Refugees%20Trauma%20and%20AD%202007.pdf>

5) Use simple language to express yourself!

We all come from different backgrounds, are raised in different ways and go through different education systems, especially compared to newly arrived migrants. We tend to speak to our beneficiaries the same way we speak to everyone else, regardless of differences in cultures, backgrounds and foreign language competences. Let's speak to our beneficiaries in ordinary, everyday language, since our primary goal is that our they understand what is going on around them!

6) Have an eye for the potential vulnerabilities of your newly arrived beneficiaries!

Remain constantly alert to their immediate concerns with regard to the difficulties they encounter in their everyday lives! Let's always keep in mind specific signs of the different vulnerabilities a refugee or disadvantaged migrant can have, and let's be aware of the referral system in our offices in order to act immediately and refer the person. Some of our beneficiaries may face serious financial constraints and poverty, for instance. In such cases, we need to find ways of addressing these issues, e.g. putting them in touch with relevant aid organisations.

7) Avoid giving promises!

Working with vulnerable groups of people, we usually have the tendency of trying to do everything, help everyone and change everything that is not working. We have to know how to properly manage the expectations of migrants. Sometimes we might be pressured to give immediate answers, or find ourselves surrounded by a big group of beneficiaries, all having urgent and important requests. We should avoid giving promises to get out of such situations, otherwise we might risk the trust people in need put in us. Let's make sure our beneficiaries have realistic expectations in relation to all facets of their new lives; unrealistic expectations might have a harmful effect on them.

IV. Maintaining professional boundaries and self-care

Having a humane approach towards, and a good relationship with the communities we are working with, especially if we are meeting them on a regular basis, is very important.

However, we need to set our boundaries from the beginning. Setting professional boundaries between ourselves and our beneficiaries prevents us not only from “over-promising”, but also from being expected to do more even if we didn’t promise anything. Setting a clear line between our professional and personal lives also mitigates the chances of a burnout. It is highly recommended to include such boundaries in the code of conduct or contracts of an organisation, however, the rest is all up to our individual self determination.

Finally, in order to be capable of providing efficient assistance to others, we need to prioritise our own self-care. As long as we are constantly stressed, exhausted or experiencing burnout, there is not much we can do to help the vulnerable.

V. Recommendations on running trainings for newly arrived migrants

First of all, let’s be aware that the trainings our NGOs offer to newly arrived migrants are tools to support their skills development and social inclusion at the same time. Shaping the range of our educational activities according to the needs and abilities of our beneficiaries, and the demands of employers, considering the quality of relations between locals and migrants, is crucial.

1) Run trainings that are needed by your newly arrived migrant beneficiaries!

To facilitate the social inclusion of new arrivals, our educational programmes should respond to the needs of the participants to the greatest extent possible. It is highly recommended to seek the opinion of migrant and refugee communities on their demands, and on the knowledge and skills they lack but wish to obtain. Let’s involve them in decision making and programme implementation! When people feel that something happens really for their own benefit, and they can actively contribute to the achievement of objectives fostering their physical, mental

and social well-being, their motivation and commitment to reach those goals intensify. This phenomenon alone offers a common ground to the participants of a class to form a community - a community that many of them wouldn't have otherwise.

2) Connect community building to education!

The desire to belong to a community is indeed very frequent among newly arrived migrants. Let's keep in mind that for disadvantaged migrants and refugees our trainings mean much more than mere opportunities for learning: they have the potential of providing a community for the participants of our classes! However, this potential must be developed and maximised as much as possible by adequate curricula, flexibility of adapting teaching methods to the abilities of the students, requiring much creativity from our trainers. Introducing short icebreakers, energisers and interactive group exercises even in a formal classroom setting is encouraged. Browsing on the Internet, one can find thousands of such games and solutions for making a lesson more interactive. These activities do not only refresh the focus of participants, but also support the understanding of one another, strengthening class community, and last but not least, they improve student performance. See your educational activities as great chances to tackle solitude and isolation of new arrivals!



Interactive exercises strengthen class community and, refreshing the focus of participants, they improve student performance.

3) Adjust the lessons and workshops to the psychological state and skills of students!

Vulnerable people often face many more hardships in life than ordinary citizens, affecting their learning process in a bad way. It is very important for them to find a safe place and welcoming community in our classes, along with patient trainers who are capable, flexible and creative to adjust their lessons or workshops to the psychological state and skills of their students. In case our teachers are overloaded with the task, or they are obliged to follow a strict syllabus, let's introduce additional practice or tutoring sessions led by volunteers!

4) Estimate the usefulness of the training with respect to its potential to support the career advancement and social inclusion of the participants!

While we are designing educational programmes based on the needs of newly arrived migrants, we should ask ourselves: will the skills we intend to offer to our beneficiaries support their career advancement and social inclusion? Building educational programmes on the demands of the participants, it is very important to continuously keep an eye on the needs of the local labour market. Certain skills, like speaking popular foreign languages, having a given level of IT knowledge, or possessing a car driving licence are constantly required from job-seekers, while other expectations of the employers might change rapidly. How does the COVID-19 challenge transform the employment opportunities of migrants and refugees in our respective countries? Let's run trainings only if they truly improve the career prospects and social inclusion of new arrivals!



A document that opens doors to more jobs.

For many people, a driver's license is not just a luxury. It is a prerequisite for many jobs they are otherwise qualified for, but the high cost and time investment stand in the way. By making driving courses more accessible, Next Step Association removes a major hidden barrier to inclusion for many.

5) Gather feedback, evaluate, and change if necessary!

Beyond prior needs assessment, and making attempts to respond to the needs of stakeholders, we should make sure to gather feedback on a regular basis, and be brave and committed to get rid of, or radically change those of our training practices that just don't work. Honest and continuous two-way communication with the participants of our classes will surely result in an increased trust in one another, and improve the quality and efficiency of services we offer to our beneficiaries.

6) Involve local people in your educational programmes!

Inclusion is incomplete as long as locals are excluded from the process. How can we describe the attitude of the majority society towards migrants in our countries? In Hungary, for instance, slipping elements of community building into educational programmes, and outreach towards local people have important roles to decrease xenophobia, typical of several Hungarians. Inviting local people to join trainings targeting most of all migrants and refugees, and organising activities run by migrants for Hungarians facilitate the social inclusion of new arrivals on a grassroots level, as these actions serve as tools for reconciliation, promoting friendship and understanding between people of various ethnic backgrounds. Outreach to locals seems to be easier through building partnerships with local organisations, informal communities and schools than addressing individuals.

Promoting friendship and understanding between people of various ethnic backgrounds.

Organising activities run by migrants for local people facilitate the social inclusion of new arrivals on a grassroots level.



