



Fostering Creativity in Adult Learners with Disabilities Through Arts – FOCAL

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

Project acronym:	FOCAL
Project title:	Fostering Creativity in Adult Learners with Disabilities Through Arts
Project number:	504442-LLP-1-2009-DE-GRUNDTVIG-GMP
Sub-programme or KA:	Grundtvig Multilateral Project
Project website:	www.focal-project.eu
Reporting period:	From 01/10/09 To 30/09/10
Report version:	1
Date of preparation:	25/10/10
Beneficiary organisation:	Bergische Volkshochschule / Zweckverband der Staedte Solingen und Wuppertal
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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Executive Summary

The project FOCAL – Fostering creativity of adult learners with disabilities through arts aims at the better integration of people with special needs into the European society. During the project lifetime the well composed consortium of eight members from the different European regions are working on the development of a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) course for teacher and trainers. The consortium of institutions as adult education centers for people with and without disabilities, day care centers, universities, and SMEs has implemented a needs analysis in all partner countries and collected best practice examples to identify needs and barriers to foster integrative offers for people with and without special educational needs (SEN). On this basis it was possible for the partners to develop a CPD course manual/handbook and a course curriculum to train interested staff. Up to date the course was tested/piloted in all partner countries on national level. A piloting in an international setting will follow at the beginning of next year. After this, the handbook and curriculum can be revised, printed and distributed to interested institutions.

Through the FOCAL course it will be possible to bring together people with and without SEN in a new, innovative and low-threshold setting. The project partners developed a comprehensive dissemination strategy to reach stakeholders on all levels. This enables the consortium, e.g. through national transfer conferences, contributions of partners on conferences, to reach stakeholders and persons who are not involved in integrative/inclusive training approaches so far. The FOCAL exhibitions, showing exhibits produced during the preceding learning partnership “ACT WELL” by artists with special needs from different European countries, open the topic of FOCAL to another very important target group: the society. Due to the fact that the exhibitions are hosted in established museums, universities, etc. people can get in contact with the topic in their daily life.

All these activities of the first project year and the activities to come until September next year lead to one aim: the partners of FOCAL want to cause changes in adult education of learners with SEN. For that reason the most important objective is the development of the named high quality handbook introducing a more effective programme to bring together people with and without SEN in education programmes based on an inclusive/integrative approach. Furthermore the project itself fosters the integration of people with SEN by bringing them together during two international creativity and arts workshops in Zaragoza, Spain in October 2010 and in Ig, Slovenia in May 2011. The highlight of the second workshop in Ig are performances of the participants at the final conference of the project with more than 100 guest from European, national and community level invited. There the participants can show how the newly developed ways to use music, dance, drama or arts give people with SEN new perspectives for their personal development and improve their everyday life. On that conference institutions are presented, which decided to implement the FOCAL course in their offer so that adult educators from all over Europe get common guidelines and recommendations for their practical work and a more specific work with the final beneficiaries (the people with SEN) is possible.

If you like to get more information about the project FOCAL, its aims and objectives, activities or partners please visit the project website: www.focal-project.eu or order the project newsletter at stierle@euconcilia.de

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1. Project Objectives

The main project objective is to cause changes in adult education for learners with special education needs (SEN). For that reason an important objective is the development of a more effective programme to bring together people with and without SEN in education programmes with an inclusive/integrative approach. Furthermore the project partners from DE, ES, HU, LT, NL, PL and SI are implementing ways to involve learners with SEN in the process of lifelong learning. These named aims are reached through the development of a manual and curriculum based on the already implemented needs analysis (including education organisations, trainers and people with SEN from all partner countries), collection of good practice examples (revealing very different standards and conditions in the different partner countries) and the latest scientific research. Additionally the project will address the training of trainers in the field because teacher training is a key to creating awareness of importance of creative learning to learners and the development of the skills to implement appropriate interventions.

The project addresses different aims and lifelong learning objectives on three levels (European, national, local):

- The development of quality lifelong learning (LL) and the promotion of high performance in adult education.
- To help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for LL for people with special needs.
- To contribute to increase participation in LL by people of all ages including people with special needs.
- To help promote creativity.
- To help provide adults with pathways to improving their knowledge and competences.
- To improve the quality and accessibility of mobility throughout Europe of individuals involved in adult education and to increase its volume so as to support the mobility of at least 7 000 such individuals per year by 2013.
- To improve pedagogical approaches and the management of adult education organisations.
- To foster key competences of the direct target group (adult educators /FOCAL course participants) and final beneficiaries (people with and without SEN).
- To improve the attractiveness and access to adult education foremost for people with special learning needs.
- To promote adult learning for marginalised and disadvantaged citizens.
- To make provision for learners with special needs, and in particular by helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training.
- To promote equality between men and women and to contribute to combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- The FOCAL project is in line with the work programme 2010 of the European Union contributing to the objective to support equal opportunities and greater social cohesion for people with disabilities. FOCAL gives models for integration and inclusion of and giving access to disadvantage groups.

2. Project Approach

To deliver the FOCAL project on a high quality level the partners composed the project with five different work packages (wp). Two wps focus on the development and implementation of the FOCAL continuous professional development (CPD) course. The wps “Management” and “Evaluation” ensure the high quality level of all project activities (e.g. by partnership agreements, internal reporting tools, regular steering group meetings). The wp evaluation is split in internal and external evaluation and therefore guarantees a close look at all activities and ensures a regular reflexion of all project steps. The internal evaluation is delivered by the project coordinator and focuses on the internal project processes, the work and satisfaction of the project partners and compliance to the work plan. The external evaluation was tendered and given to an external evaluator who is experienced in evaluation and monitoring of projects. The external evaluator is not only submitting regular (midterm and final) reports but is also a regular feedback giver and consultant in thematic issues. The midterm results of the external and internal evaluation were very positive.

To reach all set project aims the wps “Manual and CPD Course Development” and “Follow-up Activities” focus on the development of project results and outcomes. Both are well work on high quality products step by step. For the course development the partners compiled a needs analysis including all levels of stakeholders and a collection of good practice examples in their country. The quality of all development activities was and is ensured by a quality management system (set in the quality and project management handbook) e.g. by common templates and guidelines taking into account specific national characteristics. On this basis the handbook structure was developed and the chapters were written by the different partners in accordance to each partners’ expertise and the state of the art. The draft version of the handbook (manual and curriculum) was already tested in national pilots of the FOCAL course in the partner institutions. During the development the authors worked together very closely with the trainers and also included first impressions from the international workshop with people with SEN at the first project meeting in Zaragoza, ES. Thus a very close to everyday life/work handbook was developed. The draft passed two reviews so far (project internal expert review and peer review with standardised feedback questionnaires for trainers and participants during the national piloting). There will be a third review after the international piloting in Solingen, DE, facilitated by the external evaluator. After that the last changes will be included in the handbook, it will be translated in all partner languages and printed to be ready for distribution at the final conference in SI. Until then some partners offer additional courses to foster the course impact already during the project lifetime. To ensure the sustainability of the project results and outcomes the partners developed a follow-up strategy. This strategy includes inter alias a schedule for transnational FOCAL Grundtvig courses in the partner countries or letters of intent by institutions (e.g. umbrella organisations) who state the commitment to begin the process of updating their previous curriculum for adult education by inclusive/integrative offers in the field of arts.

In the wp “Dissemination” the partners developed a strategy to reach a broad public (stakeholders and society) on different levels (European, national, local) and sensitise it for the project topic. This is reached e.g. by the already available mission statement flyer, the course promotion flyer or the exhibition. The exhibition is touring through all partner countries showing exhibits created during the learning partnership “ACT WELL” by artists with disabilities. Up to date the exhibition stopped in DE, PL, NL and LT. Due to the fact that the exhibitions are mostly in public buildings (e.g. Universities) they address not only people who are already aware of the FOCAL topic (integration of people with disabilities in the society) but also “new” people. Everybody can visit the FOCAL homepage (www.focal-project.eu) to get more information or order the project newsletter. The main project activities will close with a common final conference. There more than 100 guest from European, national and local institutions will be invited and learn about the outcomes of the FOCAL project and see international performances of the project participants with SEN.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

During the first year of the project the partners, experts in different fields of creative education working together with SEN teachers, exchanged about the state of art and national good practice examples. Based on that, they identified, discussed and elaborated ways, methods, tools and learning arrangements for the work with people with SEN. In this context the partners developed new ways to use music, dance, drama or arts to give people with SEN new perspectives for their personal development and to improve their everyday life. The result of the common work of all partners is a handbook as basis for a CPD course that includes a manual and a curriculum. The manual on the one hand consists e.g. of the results of the conducted needs analysis, information how to reach stakeholders and win them for inclusive/integrative classes, theoretical basics, teacher competences and information about disabilities including case studies. The curriculum on the other hand shows a way how to implement the training. It can be understood as implementation standard for (inter-)national CPD courses but also as a pool of tools to implement a trial course to give interested trainers the possibility to get in touch with the topic.

The developed draft handbook was already tested by the partners in a national setting with the direct target group (adult educators) and the final beneficiaries (people with SEN). A piloting in a transnational context will follow at the beginning of 2011. Through the national testing of the manual it was possible so far to give common guidelines and recommendations for their practical work to more than 80 adult educators from the partner countries and thus a more specific work with the final beneficiaries is possible.

FOCAL impacts on three levels:

1. Local: More inclusive education offers will be implemented.
2. National: Exhibitions are available for a broad public (e.g. in Universities).
3. European: Inclusion of the European audience through the presentation of FOCAL on international conferences and the final project conference 2011.

Overall the partners are producing at least 30 deliverables with different dissemination levels and target audiences. To reach all given levels and target groups in an adequate way the deliverables are published on different restriction levels. The results published on confidential level are foremost of management and administrative nature and meant only for the partners (e.g. partnership agreements). The next level is the restricted level and includes inter alia internal status reports and evaluation reports. Also the developed handbook will be published on restricted level. People interested in the handbook can send a request to the consortium (e.g. stierle@euconcilia.de) or subscribe on the website (www.focal-project.eu) to receive a copy. Most FOCAL results and outcomes are published to a broad public, so everybody can profit from FOCAL. Especially activities as the national transfer workshops for stakeholders, the exhibitions, the final conference, the newsletter and the developed CPD course (offered as international Grundtvig courses to all European citizens after the project lifetime) are tools to involve the public and sensitise it for the concerns of FOCAL.

Through the high quality outcomes developed by the consortium during the project lifetime it is possible to reach the project aims like the improvement of the integration/inclusion of people with special needs into the LL process and the society.

4. Partnerships

The partners of the project “FOCAL – fostering creativity in adult learners with disabilities through arts” are coming from very different European regions as Southern, Western, Eastern and Central Europe. All partner countries have very different histories (in regard to national developments, their relation to and their time in the European Union) and experiences in the exposure to and integration of people with disabilities.

Through the project FOCAL it was possible to collect data and good practice examples about the situation of inclusive/integrative offers in all partner countries. The analysis of the realised needs analysis and good practice collection showed very interesting findings. Thus in some countries it was very difficult to find adequate good practice examples at all, in other many offers for primary school children but only few for adults were identified. Although the different partner countries had very different experiences in the implementation of integrative/inclusive offers and also very different notations there were also many things in common. On that basis it was possible for the eight partners from DE, ES, HU, LT, NL, PL and SI to develop a well structured and well-founded CPD course manual and curriculum to give common guidelines to adult educators in whole Europe. To reach this high quality the consortium was carefully composed to assure that all necessary skills exist in the partnership. The view of the science is brought in by the HAN University (NL). The role of the coordinator is carried by EUConcilia (DE) who has profound experience in European project and quality management. The broad part of structuring, coordinating and editing the handbook is realised by Bergische VHS (DE). Thanks to the big network as umbrella organisation EFOESZ (HU) brings in the view of many different stakeholders. The Polish partner PSOUU who has many experiences in the production and dissemination of products as flyers and posters leads all project activities in this field. CUDV Draga (SI) who is experienced in conferences on European level represents the project on European conferences and hosts the final conference at the end of the project. Finally IPA (ES) and KNJUC (LT) bring in their profound experience in creative work with learners with and without disabilities. Through the common work in the project it is possible for all partners to learn more about the work (in their field) in other European countries as well as to work in an international consortium and setting. Many of the partners are already experienced in participation in European project and can bring in their huge experience in this field. Others are rather new in the European setting and can collect new impressions and are supported by the experienced partners.

Due to this international composition and expertise the project contributes to the objective of a European lifelong learning area by developing a common training curriculum for adult educators. By doing so the project partners step out of their national well-known training scene and learn from other countries’ experiences. They are developing a CPD course for at least 7 countries setting standards on European level in the field of inclusive education of people with and without SEN. Only by realising the training course with transnational partners, the project can have impact on several European countries. It is part of the project design to develop a course curriculum that appeals and aims at adult educators in many European countries. To spread the ideas of FOCAL further, the consortium already started to plan the implementation of numerous transnational Grundtvig courses for adult educators in entire Europe. The training dates can be found soon on the www.focal-project.eu website.

5. Plans for the Future

The second year of the project FOCAL will focus on the testing, improvement and promotion of the developed CPD course for trainers and adult educators.

Most important for the testing and improvement of the course is the completion of the national piloting in the partner countries. Few partners have to do the first national piloting course in October and November 2010. Some partners will do additional pilots in the next months to broaden the feedback base of piloting participants and to get more inputs about the quality of the training and possible rooms for improvements. A highlight will be the international piloting of the CPD course. That will take place at the very beginning of February 2012 in Solingen, Germany. There around 15 participants from all partner countries participate in the CPD pilot in an international setting. Subsequent to the piloting there will be evaluation activities facilitated by the external evaluator. After the evaluation of findings and possible identification of last needs for improvements the partners will rework the manual chapters and the curriculum and set the final version of the handbook which will be layouted by the HAN, who is very experienced in artistic design. The final version of the manual will be ready for printing in March 2011 and thus ready for distribution at the last steering group meeting in Slovenia. This meeting will be accompanied by an international workshop for people with disabilities (final beneficiaries of this project) and a final project conference where many stakeholders from all partner countries, from the host country and the European level are invited. The partners already developed a programme for these events. The conference on the one hand will hold the possibility to show the project products and outcomes as well as the new innovative possibilities the project offers to a broad public and especially to people with SEN. In the workshop for the final beneficiaries on the other hand at least 40 participants from all partner countries will work together in a creative way (with methods developed during the FOCAL project) in different sub-groups (e.g. drama, music, dance). The participants get the possibility to present themselves and perform during the final conference.

To include and inform the public is the main activity for the upcoming project months besides the completion of the CPD course handbook. One important part of the dissemination strategy of FOCAL is the named final conference. Additionally the touring exhibition will go on and stop over in Zaragoza, ES, Budapest, HU and Ig, SI (simultaneously to the final conference). In combination with the exhibition the host partners (and also all other partners) will organise a national transfer workshop. There stakeholders in the field from the different partner countries will learn more about the project FOCAL, its intentions, outcomes and products. The stakeholders can work together on FOCAL topics to get an impression about the FOCAL issues. To reach even more people in the partner countries on professional level the partners will continue to participate in conferences to promote FOCAL. To foster the visibility of FOCAL in the broad public the partners write articles about the project in newspapers, magazines and journals.

To assure and foster the impact of FOCAL the partners develop a schedule to implement international FOCAL CPD Grundtvig courses. Additionally the partners already started to translate open fields and questions occurred during FOCAL into a follow-up project to foster the integration of people with disabilities into the lifelong learning process and in the society.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The project FOCAL contributes to different EU policies in many ways. In this section we like to come back to the objectives of FOCAL named in chapter 1 of this report. All of these objectives contribute to EU policies in a special way. The European dimension is given in all phases and parts of the project because the partners collect (e.g. good practice examples and needs analysis) and bring together their national findings to compare, analyse and improve them in a European setting.

- The project FOCAL develops a training course for adult educators working with people with SEN that fulfils quality criteria set during the project, thus promotes high performances of adult educators and leads to better integration of creative work with SEN people.
- The project FOCAL aims at the improvement of the accessibility of the lifelong learning programme for people with SEN as well as it develops a more effective programme to bring together people with and without SEN. Therefore the special training part “Awareness and Equality” is a red line in the develop CPD course.
- Since the good practice analysis showed that there are only few offers of inclusive/integrative learning for people with and without SEN in the partner countries the FOCAL project developed guidelines how to reach people with and without disabilities and how to show them the great number of advantages of inclusive/integrative offers. The developed CPD course allows that more people with SEN participate in the lifelong learning process.
- Through the better integration in the lifelong learning and inclusive offers working with creative learning methods people with SEN get a better chance for education and to learn how to express themselves. This integration in the education process leads to a better integration in daily life, society and finally in employability.
- During the first project year the partners collected, evaluated and analysed good practice examples, scientific literature about integration of people with and without SEN in inclusive classes and how to work with them in a creative way. Based on these findings it was possible to develop a manual and curriculum for a train the trainer course that is and will be hosted in the partner countries to equip adult educators all over Europe with the skills to give inclusive classes.
- Through FOCAL people with SEN from the partner intuitions got the rare possibility to make a journey to Spain in 2009 and they will also travel to Slovenia in 2011. The two countries host an international creative workshop for the participants from the partner countries. Through good media coverage especially at the final conference, where the participants present performances showing the workshop outcomes, these workshops contribute to raise awareness for needs of learners with SEN, make them more visible in the public and foster their integration in society.
- The project FOCAL sensitises the participants of the developed CPD course as well as a broad public (through all the name dissemination activities and channels) about different aspects of equality and diversity. The adult education trainers equipped with the needed skills can pass their knowledge to both, their organisation and their own class' participants. By the sensitisation of all stakeholders barriers for people with SEN can be lowered in many parts of life.

Last but not least FOCAL is in line with the work programme 2010 of the European Union contributing to the objective to support equal opportunities and greater social cohesion for people with disabilities. It gives models for integration of and giving access to disadvantaged groups.

