

Presentation **Hilde van Schaeren** during the **final Conference May 2010 Perugia**.

TOGETHER TO GET THERE.

Students of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, Sittard (NL) can participate in a minor *Cultural Diversity* which takes place in the ten last weeks of the second semester. The minor enables students to look from different perspectives to possible problems occurring when students come in contact with “the other”, especially when this “other” has a differing cultural background, a broader orientation on differing cultural orientations, seems to be very successful. Successful passing the exams gives students 15 European Credits. The minor consists of three parts, each part has a different didactical approach.

The first part contains a theoretical framework; students work in small groups with a problem based learning approach on casuistry. At the end students finish this part with a multiple choice test.

The second part of the minor focuses on intercultural communication. In this presentation I would like to tell you more about a pilot project in which students made a bridge between their own social network and professionals. This pilot project Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, faculty of Social Work, worked in close cooperation with **FORUM** - National Institute for Multicultural Affairs - (<http://www.forum.nl/international>). The objective was to create an awareness within the social network of the students about the impact of prejudices on intercultural relationships or to invite the social network of the students to participate more actively in the society. In this pilot the intercultural focus was conditional.

Students combined the ICC model of Edwin Hoffman (TOPOI model) with a practical experience. The pilot project “**Together to get there**” (<http://www.to-get-there.nl>) was coached by **FORUM** . 50 students of the minor organised a “home meeting” with their own social network (family, friends, neighbours, sport friends, or people they meet at school, at work et cetera) on the one hand, and professionals as politicians, police officers, social workers, health care workers on the other hand. Students chose their own target group (or network) to work with. The main objective of the project is reached if they can motivate (especially excluded) people to do something to improve their own situation. Additionally the project aims to create an awareness (within the dominant group/ or within minorities) about possible negative impact of prejudices on behaviour and attitude towards people

with differing cultural backgrounds. Students discovered together with their network a key issue or problem/a hidden barrier, which might occur e.g. in institutional bureaucratic environments.

On beforehand students got a first training by FORUM. In this training they learned how to contact people and how to organise such a “home meeting”. In this home meeting students do have to formulate a key issue and they have to try together with their “home meeting group” to define a question and to seek an answer or an adequate strategy to tackle the given problem. In the second training students will learn how to contact professionals, counsellors at the municipality, bureaucrats, educators, professionals involved in health care and welfare services et cetera. If relevant students will contact them and together they will try to make a bridge between policy makers, professionals involved, (hopefully) able to give answers to the formulated question. In a way they are binding and bonding ordinary people (with a focus on the excluded ones) and bureaucrats, policymakers, politicians, and professionals who are professionally working in other environments and functioning on other levels. The pilot will be successful if professionals meet people in their own environment and if awareness is raised about related questions/problems which might be not obvious at first sight when people meet each other in professional contexts. Participants of the “home meetings’ will possibly realise that in order to solve problems they have to engage themselves too, even if in an earlier stage, they experienced hidden barriers. This pilot TOGETHER TO GET THERE aims to motivate people to handle their own problems.

The price winner of this pilot project was a young Dutch/Moroccan student **Taoufik Fashi**. He made a film in which he showed the prejudices of first and second generation migrant youngsters against police officers, and vice versa. The student organised meetings with the police officers and the youngsters. Both decided to end the meetings with a soccer game. His initiative is sustainable because they will continue to meet each other on a regular base.

The second price of the pilot went to two female students **Samira Louali** and **Demi Hellemons** who invited migrant women to go with them to a railway station, in order to show them how to buy train tickets. They invited a professional of the railway station who explained the migrant women how they can formulate complaints if something goes wrong in a railway station.

Additional to this experience, students learned how to contact professionals and people living next door. The Netherlands is very individualistic orientated. So for the students this project was quite an experience. Beside this they had to reflect about communication difficulties which might occur during these meetings. At the end of

this second part students had to present the final conclusions of their home meeting and they had to write a reflection paper. Based on the presentation and the individual reflection report, students obtained (or not) 5 European Credits.

More information about this project you will find on the following website:

http://www.forum.nl/betrokkenheidloont/Together_to_get_there/

The third and last part of the minor focussed on intercultural interventions and on problem solving strategies. This part is based on the theoretical approach of Nel Jessurun, an intercultural psychologist.

The evaluation report of the pilot project will be published on the website of FORUM in autumn next.

Following persons were involved:

Forum: Anne Czyzewski
Social Work Faculty/HSZUYD:

Maja Rocak (tutor project together to get there + trainer): social worker and researcher CESRT

Hilde van Schaeren (Coordinator minor/lecturer + trainer).

Literature:

Hoff man, E. (2009). Interculturele gespreksvoering. Theorie en praktijk van het TOPOI model. Bohn Stafleu van Loghum: Houten.