

Bridging Cultures



Trainer's Manual

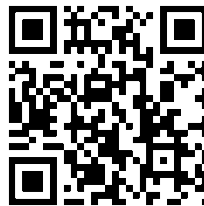
**A Post-Event Practical Guide
to Intercultural Non-Formal Education**



Disclaimer

 A note before you turn the page

This manual was developed by the Phoenix Knowledge Wings gGmbH after the Erasmus+ KA122-ADU short-term mobility project titled "Bridging Cultures" (2024-1-DE02-KA122-ADU-000196532) in Turkey as a practical companion for trainers working within the Erasmus+ framework, with a particular focus on non-formal education involving culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse youth — including those with refugee or migrant backgrounds.



 Scan to explore: *Bridging Cultures* project in detail

All tools, checklists, case scenarios, and reflections included here are based on accumulated field experience, critical observation, feedback from participants and colleagues, and sincere attempts to make intercultural training more conscious, more human, and more just. They do not claim to offer universal solutions, nor to speak on behalf of any culture, group, or community. Rather, they serve as prompts — to think deeper, prepare better, and act more compassionately.

 It is important to emphasise that we approach such categories as *race*, *ethnicity*, *religion*, *nationality*, and *culture* through the lens of **social constructivism**. These concepts are not seen as fixed or essential characteristics of individuals, but as historically and socially shaped frameworks — often fluid, sometimes politicised, and always evolving. We reject the practice of ascribing identity or behaviours to others based on assumptions, background, or visible difference.

What might appear static or “traditional” is often, on closer reflection, dynamic and lived differently across generations, regions, and individuals. Our responsibility as trainers is not to reduce complexity but to make space for it.

 Cultures are dynamic. Identities are layered. People are not categories — they are stories in motion. What works beautifully in one context might feel awkward or inappropriate in another. What feels respectful to one participant may seem unfamiliar to another. This manual encourages *sensitivity*, not perfection — *readiness*, not rigidity.

Trainers are invited to adapt all contents with care, localise with curiosity, and always listen more than they speak. The examples shared here are fictionalised for educational purposes; any resemblance to real people or situations is purely coincidental — or deeply human.

 This is not the final word. It is an open door. Welcome!



Glossary for Intercultural Training in Erasmus+ Contexts

 *Key terms and concepts related to non-formal education, cultural sensitivity, and conflict management*

Term

Definition

Intercultural Submerging

A trainer's immersive approach to understanding the culture of participants — including learning their traditions, languages, art, media, and values — through close observation, participation, and respectful presence.

Simulation Game



A structured, role-based educational activity that allows participants to explore complex social, intercultural or political issues by acting as stakeholders in a fictional or real-life inspired scenario.

Post-Event Reader



A digital library of thematic materials (articles, laws, fiction, etc.) sent to participants after a training to deepen understanding and support continued learning. Often more academic and advanced than the pre-training reader.

Welcome Reader



A curated set of texts, videos, and audio files sent before the training to introduce the topic and familiarise participants with key ideas in an accessible and engaging way.

Emotional Safety



A condition where participants feel respected, not judged, and secure enough to share thoughts or emotions without fear of shame or harm. Essential for meaningful participation.

Microaggression



A subtle, often unintentional remark or action that can offend or marginalise people based on identity (race, religion, gender, etc.). Important to recognise and address respectfully.

Cultural Trigger

A word, image, action or topic that unintentionally causes emotional distress due to a participant's personal, cultural, or historical background.

Role Reversal

A method used in simulation or discussion where participants adopt a perspective opposite their own (e.g., majority/minority, secular/religious) to build empathy and critical insight.



Term

Definition

Learning by Doing



A non-formal education principle where participants actively experience and reflect on knowledge rather than passively receiving it — through games, role-play, or challenges.

Debriefing



A guided reflection session after an activity or simulation, allowing participants to unpack emotions, analyse dynamics, and link experience to learning outcomes.

Anonymous Feedback



A feedback method allowing participants to express honest reflections or discomforts without revealing identity. Encourages emotional safety.

Chatham House Rule



A confidentiality principle: participants are free to use the information shared, but may not reveal who said what. Builds trust in sensitive conversations.

Gallery of Identity



A creative exercise where participants express aspects of their identity through drawings or symbols, later displayed in the room to foster respect and group cohesion.

Opt-Out Mechanism



A way for participants to respectfully step away from an activity (especially sensitive ones) without explanation or stigma. Essential for trauma-informed practice.

Kinesthetic Learning



A method that involves movement and body-based activities to explore complex themes — especially useful for trust-building, communication and empathy.

Cultural Misreading



When someone misinterprets a gesture, silence, or behaviour due to different cultural norms or communication styles. Often the root of unintended conflict.

Fatigue Sensitivity



Trainer's ability to recognise and adapt to emotional or physical tiredness in participants — particularly during fasting, emotional intensity or cognitive overload.

Restorative Circle



A safe-space group dialogue method used after a conflict or tense moment to allow everyone to speak, listen, and heal without assigning blame.



Term

Definition

Structured Flexibility

A trainer mindset where the plan is clear, but adaptable to the emerging needs, moods, and rhythms of a diverse group. Balances structure with openness.

Invisible Participation

Engagement that happens quietly — through observation, note-taking, non-verbal support — often by shy, new, or linguistically challenged participants. Should be respected equally.

On the Use of “Leader” and “Leadership” in This Manual

In the context of this manual, the terms “**leader**” and “**leadership**” appear frequently — and intentionally so. However, we invite the reader to interpret these terms through the lens of **non-formal education, intercultural sensitivity, and youth empowerment**.

We do **not** use “leader” to imply **hierarchy, dominance, or top-down control**. Instead, we refer to:

-  **Youth taking initiative in intercultural contexts**
-  **Facilitators creating inclusive and culturally sensitive spaces**
-  **Individuals guiding group processes with intercultural awareness and empathy**

When we speak of “leadership,” we often mean:

- **Ethical and intercultural leadership** – guided by values like empathy, fairness, dialogue, and cultural humility
- **Emerging leadership** – especially among young people from refugee, migrant, or minority backgrounds
- **Shared leadership** – where responsibility and voice are distributed, not centralised
- **Situational leadership** – arising organically from context, culture, and group needs

Where appropriate, we alternate “leader” with terms such as **facilitator, coordinator, guide, or host** — depending on the educational dynamic. Similarly, “leadership” may be interchanged with **intercultural competence, initiative, empowerment, or participation**.

This flexible use of language reflects a deeper commitment:

 *To build cultures of belonging and intercultural understanding — not just structures of leadership.*



We encourage you — as a trainer, youth worker, or participant — to reflect on what “intercultural leadership” means in your own context, and how it can be redefined to serve justice, inclusion, and meaningful collaboration.

Use of Images and Participant Consent

A note on the people behind the pictures

All individuals depicted in the photographs used throughout this manual — and in any related visual materials from our Erasmus+ training courses, youth exchanges, and learning activities — have given their **informed and explicit consent** to be photographed for the purpose of illustrating, sharing, and disseminating the results of their project participation.

This consent was obtained in accordance with the principles of the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR – Regulation (EU) 2016/679)**, and participants were informed of the scope of image use, their rights to withdraw consent at any time, and the non-commercial educational nature of these publications.



 Scan to explore: GDPR text with EEA relevance

-  The use of imagery serves a dual purpose:
- to document the collective learning process and outcomes
 - and to preserve the joyful, intercultural moments shared together — the kind we hope remain long after the final evaluation form is completed

All images are used under the **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International licence (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)**¹. This means they may be shared with credit, but not altered or used for commercial purposes.

 In every instance, we aim to balance visibility with dignity, and celebration with consent. We thank our participants for not only allowing us to capture these moments, but for making them possible.

¹ If not stated otherwise. For instance, Manual's title page cover image is from freepik.com



 Scan to explore: Intercultural Communication (Wikipedia)



 Scan to explore: Intercultural Dialogue (Wikipedia)



 Scan to explore: Youth Work Essentials – Intercultural Dialogue

Introduction: More Than a Method – The Human Art of Intercultural Training

 Training in the Erasmus+ context is never “just delivery.” It is never only about methods, energisers, or successful schedules. It is about people. And more precisely, it is about people who meet across difference — linguistic, religious, cultural, generational, and sometimes even ideological — and still manage to learn together, build trust, and imagine new forms of cooperation.



In this shared space of **non-formal education**, the trainer does not stand above the group as an expert, but among them — as a careful observer, bridge-builder, translator of tension, and sometimes even an emotional first responder. This is especially true when working with **culturally or religiously diverse youth**, including those with **refugee and migrant backgrounds**. Here, the trainer's role shifts from technique to *presence*. From content to *connection*.

🌍 A young woman from Morocco might hesitate to join a mixed-gender roleplay. A participant from rural Turkey may carry unspoken grief. A Ukrainian teen may bring with them recent memories of displacement, loss, or hope — sometimes all at once. These realities don't exist outside your training room; they walk into it, sit down quietly, and wait to see how you'll respond — not to *their story*, but to *them as people*.

This manual section is a guide, but also an invitation. An invitation to see your role not only as an educator, but as a culturally sensitive facilitator of trust, care, and respectful curiosity. Through concrete tools, case-based test tasks, checklists, and reflective questions, you will be supported in:

- anticipating **misunderstandings and unspoken tensions**
- creating safer and more inclusive training spaces
- navigating moments of emotional intensity with calm
- and most importantly — learning from your participants, not just about them

💡 You don't need to be an expert in every culture or language. What you need is willingness: to notice more, to judge less, and to adapt without losing your integrity. The best trainers are those who stay teachable, curious, and kind — even under pressure.

Let this be your map, not your manual. Your compass, not your script. Your reminder that in every training room, long before the icebreakers and simulations begin, what matters most is this: *every person in front of you has something sacred to protect*. And the way you train — the words you choose, the silence you allow, the food you serve, the jokes you don't make — may just be the beginning of something life-changing. For them. And for you.

Training is Not a TED Conference

🎤 It's important to acknowledge that some trainers and facilitators are inspired by the TED format — the charismatic speaker, the captivating visuals, the clever anecdotes, and the inevitable standing ovation. There are even entire books dedicated to mastering the TED talk. However, while such presentations may be engaging, they are, at their core, **monologues**.

TED talks may serve as a dynamic *starting point* for introducing ideas or setting a tone (*you will find one later*), but transforming an entire training session into a one-way performance is fundamentally at odds with the goals of non-formal education. It doesn't matter whether the



speaker is a global celebrity or a respected scholar — if the session becomes a lecture *from above*, it risks reinforcing hierarchy and passivity, which is not what we aim for.

In our context, we value dialogue over declaration, and interaction over instruction. The young people we work with are not merely future leaders-in-waiting; they are *active* intercultural leaders in the making. From the very first session, participants must be encouraged to take responsibility, speak up, challenge ideas, collaborate, and act. A good training session is not an applause-worthy show — it's a dynamic, participatory, and respectful learning experience.

Training is a Profound Investment of Time

🕒 *"Everything else is beyond our grasp, only time is ours. But no one thinks he owes anything when he has received a gift of time. And yet this is the only thing that even a grateful person cannot return."*

—Seneca²

Time is the most valuable capital any of us possess. In this spirit, we ask not only for the time of our participants, but also for their full engagement — because they are not *spending* their time with us, they are *investing* it.

💡 Our training programmes are carefully crafted to offer long-term dividends: not financial returns, but new knowledge, practical skills, meaningful connections, and new perspectives on both challenges and solutions. This includes reframing how participants think about their role in society, in leadership, and in intercultural decision-making.

² *Moral letters to Lucilius*, Letter 1. "On saving time".



👉 *Hands-on environmental action.*

Practical session of collecting, sorting, and analysing waste during a training on environmental leadership. Learning sustainability through shared work under the sun brought participants closer across cultures and languages.

Cyprus, October 2019.

We must communicate this clearly from the very beginning: the time our participants give us — particularly the time of their youth — is irreplaceable. In return, we must honour that investment by preparing meticulously, adapting sensitively, and facilitating meaningfully.

Our mission is not only to inform, but to *transform*. Participants should leave our sessions with more than memories and photos — they should leave with a sense of growth, of purpose, and of personal responsibility. To achieve this, we must design every moment with intention, always ready to offer opportunities for participants to test their ideas, apply their skills, and reflect on their development.



Participants: Motivated, Engaged, and Diverse

 The careful selection of participants is critical. We seek motivated young people — regardless of gender, background, or status — who are genuinely interested in intercultural leadership. The selection process should begin well before the event, and where possible, it should involve reading CVs, speaking to referees (such as university staff), and understanding each candidate's interests and motivations.

The ideal group size is between 20 and 30. Fewer than 20 limits the diversity and group dynamics necessary for interactive activities. More than 30 can be difficult to manage effectively, especially in exercises that require in-depth facilitation, such as simulations or tactical games.

 Non-formal education is not “easier” than formal teaching — it is more complex. Trainers are not simply delivering information; they are creating experiences that must often achieve more than a university course in a much shorter time, and in a far more engaging way.

This also means understanding and anticipating the lived realities of participants. Some may come from refugee or migrant backgrounds, others may carry trauma, cultural expectations, or different religious beliefs. Trainers must be aware of their own cultural assumptions and be trained to manage sensitive topics, avoid bias, and build an inclusive, respectful atmosphere. Culturally sensitive facilitation is not optional — it is essential.

 Our participants are not compelled to attend; they are volunteers, investing their time willingly. We must respect that by ensuring that our sessions are not only effective, but also engaging and inspiring. When sessions are designed with care and purpose, participants are more likely to return, stay involved, and even promote the project among their peers.

Location: A Space That Inspires

 The training venue should support participation, movement, and collaboration. An ideal location is:

- Comfortable, well-lit, with **natural light** and windows for ventilation.
- Spacious enough to allow breakout groups to work independently.
- Flexible in layout — furniture should be movable to allow different configurations such as a circle or horseshoe.
- Equipped with a soft floor or carpet if artistic or dramatic exercises are planned.
- Accessible and welcoming for participants with physical or sensory disabilities.

A stimulating and inclusive environment makes a difference. Rooms without windows can make participants feel confined, even when the topic is interesting. Fresh air, natural light, and comfortable seating enhance focus and emotional well-being — especially for long sessions.



Essential Equipment

 Trainers should ensure the venue includes:

- A reliable **projector** and **speakers**.
- A **flipchart stand**, **flipchart paper**, and **markers** in several colours.
- A **whiteboard** with dry-erase markers or a **chalkboard**.
- **Sticky notes**, **index cards**, **tape**, **push pins**, **scissors**, **A4 paper**, and any printed **handouts** or **worksheets**.

These materials support hands-on, visual learning and encourage active participation. Be prepared to divide groups, play games, run simulations, and allow participants to present their own findings creatively.

 Ideally, training should not just end in the room. If possible, allow participants to apply what they've learned in real-world tasks. Whether that means co-designing a follow-up activity, running a mini-campaign, or taking on a local leadership challenge — the skills gained should have an immediate outlet.

A well-prepared trainer doesn't just deliver a session — they hold space for meaningful transformation. Respect the participants' time, adapt to their diversity, and create an experience that challenges, supports, and inspires them to lead interculturally. That's how training becomes more than an event — it becomes a turning point.

Preliminary Preparation and On-Site Verification

 It is essential that trainers visit the training venue one or two days in advance to carry out a thorough inspection. Familiarise yourself with the precise location of the training room, the toilets, emergency exits, and the area designated for coffee breaks. Ensure you know where refreshments will be delivered and stored, and that no doors are unexpectedly locked or access routes blocked.



☕ *Coffee-break, done right.*

Plenty of space, snacks, and kindness — even the break was an opportunity for intercultural dialogue during this training for young law students exploring leadership and justice. Romania, May 2023.

🎥 Test all equipment before the training day — this includes checking the projector, audio system, and compatibility between your laptop or tablet and the venue's connectors. Make sure the sound is working properly, particularly if you plan to use educational videos or audio clips.



Verify internet availability, but always download critical materials in advance to avoid relying solely on a stable connection.

Every aspect of the logistics should be fully set up *before* the first participant walks through the door. A smooth, professional start creates a powerful first impression and sets the tone for mutual respect and engagement.

Anticipating Challenges and Preparing Plan B

⚠️ Be prepared for unexpected situations — they *will* arise. A responsible facilitator always has a Plan B, and ideally, a Plan C. For example:

- If a power cut occurs, be ready to run the session without a projector.
- If printed materials are forgotten, ensure there's an alternative activity ready.
- If markers or flipcharts are missing, adapt the plan with interactive discussion or movement-based tasks.

Improvisation is a skill — but only when it's backed by prior thought and contingency planning. Do not let participants feel the session is disorganised or poorly managed. They view you as a professional and a leader in the learning space, even if you foster an atmosphere of equality. Your calm response to difficulties models real-life leadership under pressure.

🤝 When delivering training with a colleague or co-trainer, always discuss potential issues in advance. For instance:

- How to de-escalate interpersonal tensions or cultural misunderstandings.
- How to adjust the content if it is too challenging or not culturally relevant.
- How to handle a dominant participant who interrupts others.
- How to adapt if participants become emotionally triggered by sensitive themes.

🎭 You can even design these disruptions into the training itself — turn them into reflective learning moments on leadership, inclusion, or emotional intelligence. Culturally and religiously diverse groups, or participants with refugee/migrant experiences, may bring complex life histories into the room. Be sensitive, prepared, and supportive — and approach all with humility and care.

Training Duration

🕒 The duration of your training depends on the context, the host organisation, and the needs of participants. However, training should never be limited to 30 minutes or 1–2 hours. That is simply enough time for introductions.



To engage with themes like intercultural leadership meaningfully, we recommend sessions lasting a full day (at least 8 hours, including lunch and coffee breaks). Ideally, the training should start mid-morning — not too early, so participants are well-rested, and not in the afternoon, when energy levels dip.

Be mindful not to overwhelm participants with too much information. Allow time for reflection, small-group discussions, and personal processing. If the training is dynamic and meaningful, participants may want to stay longer — but you must respect venue constraints and participants' outside responsibilities.

🏠 If you are conducting the training in a university or college setting, coordinate in advance to avoid clashes with scheduled lectures or classes. Book the space for the entire day to avoid being displaced mid-session.

Facilitator's Checklist

- ✅ Before launching your training session, run through this preparation checklist:
 1. Select motivated participants with attention to diversity and inclusion.
 2. Develop a detailed programme with time for discussion and reflection.
 3. Prepare your methodology and all necessary materials well in advance.
 4. Book and inspect the training venue, including possible outdoor areas.
 5. Arrange drinks and snacks for coffee breaks.
 6. Test your transport route (by car or public transport) at the same time of day as the event to check for delays or traffic.
 7. Coordinate with venue hosts (or university staff) to confirm room use, schedule, and any access procedures.
 8. Consider inviting a guest expert on intercultural leadership or social responsibility.
 9. Budget responsibly — keeping costs low while maintaining quality. Typically, costs relate to refreshments and the printing of certificates. Everything else can often be secured in-kind through partnerships or prior agreements.

Pre-Training Communication

📧 One of the most important and often overlooked steps is to connect with your participants *before* the training begins.

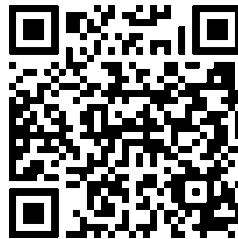


Send them a short, engaging email — no longer than one page — introducing yourself and the project. Let them know what they can expect, what they might want to prepare, and how the training will run. Keep the tone informative but warm, professional yet personal.

This initial communication not only builds trust, but helps participants feel welcomed, respected, and oriented. It also gives them the opportunity to raise any specific needs (dietary, accessibility, or religious/cultural considerations) that you can accommodate in advance.

💬 In culturally diverse groups, pre-training contact also allows participants to gently signal any areas of concern — whether it's sensitivity to gender roles, the need for prayer breaks, or language barriers. Trainers who are proactive in understanding and supporting such needs create safer, more inclusive spaces where authentic learning can take place.

With meticulous preparation, cultural awareness, and flexible problem-solving, your training becomes more than just a session — it becomes a meaningful investment in young people's growth and capacity for intercultural leadership.



📱 Scan to explore: UNHCR – Refugee Youth Empowerment (DAFI Scholarship Programme)

Preparing the Welcome Reader

📖 *“Nothing is more powerful than reading; no one is a greater liar than he who holds that reading a book is a passive gesture. To read, hear, study, understand – these are the only ways to construct life beyond life, life alongside of life. To know is the first step toward change.”*

—Roberto Saviano³

³ Saviano, R. *ZeroZeroZero*. Penguin Publishing Group (2015).



A key element of effective training is what happens *before* participants enter the room. To support deep engagement with the theme of youth intercultural leadership, we strongly recommend preparing a **Welcome Reader** — a digital pre-training library designed to inform, inspire and ignite curiosity. This resource will serve as an introduction to the training’s core topics, offering participants a flexible, multi-format toolkit to begin exploring issues in advance.

What is the Welcome Reader?

 The Welcome Reader is a curated digital collection containing up to 20–25 carefully selected items, including:

- **Texts** – These may be short articles, case studies, excerpts from policy reports, historical documents, literary pieces or poems related to intercultural leadership, youth voice, social justice, or civic engagement.
- **Videos** – Clips from relevant films or documentaries, recordings of talks or panel discussions, short interviews or even specially recorded welcome messages from trainers or guest speakers.
- **Audio files** – These might include podcast segments, radio features, roundtable discussions, or audio narratives reflecting personal stories of leadership and intercultural dilemmas.

The purpose is not to overwhelm, but to offer a **rich variety** so that participants — with their diverse backgrounds and learning preferences — can engage with materials that resonate most with them. Fiction, non-fiction, data, emotion — all are valid tools for understanding complex social realities.

Why use a Welcome Reader?

 This approach aligns with **FLIP learning** – where foundational knowledge is explored independently before the session, enabling more interactive and advanced activities during the training itself. It also makes the learning experience more inclusive by:

- Giving participants from migrant, refugee, or culturally/religiously diverse backgrounds the chance to process material at their own pace.
- Allowing space for linguistic preparation, especially when English is not the participants’ first language.
- Creating time for self-reflection, which may be particularly important for those with lived experiences of marginalisation or trauma.



How to share it

 A few days before the training begins, send participants a short, clear and friendly message by email or WhatsApp. The message should:

- Introduce yourself and your role.
- Explain the purpose of the Welcome Reader.
- Highlight how the content connects to the training themes.
- Offer technical guidance on how to access the files.
- Suggest how to navigate the collection.

We recommend providing two alternative links (e.g. Google Drive and MEGA) to ensure accessibility. Test both links yourself before sharing.

Suggested message format

 *Example from a previous training:*

Dear participants,

My name is Kirill and I'll be your facilitator during our upcoming training on youth intercultural leadership. I'm really looking forward to working together — and to get us started, I've put together a small digital collection that I hope you'll find engaging, thought-provoking, and accessible.

You can access the Welcome Reader here:

[Google Drive link]

or (if you experience any issues):

[MEGA link]

*This Reader contains a mix of texts, videos and audio files. It's not necessary to go through everything, but I kindly encourage you to explore **at least 5 or 6 files** that interest you most. These will provide you with some context, voices and perspectives that will enrich our discussions.*

To help you navigate, I've grouped the folders like this:

- **(#)** – Essential reading/listening for those with limited time
- **[\$]** – In-depth knowledge and expert insights
- **ψ** – Personal narratives that speak to emotions, identity, and empathy

Feel free to start reading today, or bring the files with you for the journey if you're travelling. For those of us working in English as a second (or third!) language, this will also help build familiarity with key terms and topics.



🌟 *Our sessions are about co-creating understanding, not one-way teaching. The more prepared we are, the more meaningful our learning together will be.*

See you very soon — and thank you for investing your time and spirit in this journey.

Warm wishes,

Kirill

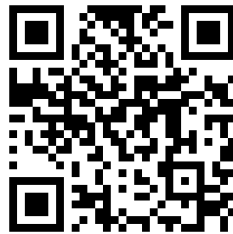
(your enthusiastic facilitator)

Final Thoughts

💡 Preparing a Welcome Reader is more than just information-sharing — it sets a tone of respect, responsibility, and readiness. It gives participants the opportunity to engage with intercultural leadership on their own terms before they ever step into the room.

For groups with diverse linguistic, cultural, or experiential backgrounds, this kind of preparation is especially valuable. It signals that you, as a trainer, have made the effort to design a learning space that is inclusive, thoughtful, and rooted in care.

By laying this foundation, you're not only creating better training — you're building trust.



📱 Scan to explore: Global Oneness Project – Identity Stories

Starting the Training

🌈 The beginning of any training is more than a formality — it sets the tone for everything that follows. While most sessions begin with introductions, it's important to move beyond the standard “name, country, school” format. Instead, turn the opening moments into a vibrant, inclusive and creative opportunity for participants to *show who they are, connect with one another*, and begin stepping into the spirit of intercultural leadership.



A Creative and Inclusive Introduction

🌈 One particularly effective method is the **Identity Avatar** activity. Distribute A4 sheets and coloured markers, and ask participants to create a visual representation of themselves. This could reflect:

- Their identity
- Personal values or aspirations
- How they *see* themselves — or how they *do not* want to be seen
- A symbol, animal, structure, or image that expresses their inner world

Give participants 5 to 10 minutes depending on age, energy levels, and the presence of any language barriers. Emphasise that this is *not* about artistic skill, but *expression*.

🤝 Once finished, ask participants to pair up and introduce themselves to one another using their avatars. This helps break the ice and encourages deeper, non-verbal forms of connection. Trainers should join in, standing or sitting with participants — never above or apart. From the very start, modelling intercultural leadership means *leading by presence*, not by authority.



📱 Scan to explore: TEDx: Cross-Cultural Communication | Pellegrino Riccardi

🎤 Afterwards, invite those who wish to present their avatar to the full group. Some may speak a few words, others may offer longer reflections. Allow time and space — this moment is about visibility, self-definition, and trust.

🖼️ Collect the avatars and tape them to the wall, creating a “Gallery of Identities.” This visual map of the group’s diversity adds warmth and character to the venue and represents the unique blend of experiences and perspectives in the room.



🎨 *A mysterious drawing that sparked a real conversation.*

This anime-style avatar, handed to the trainer at the end of the course, led to a deep and touching discussion about identity, symbols, and being misunderstood. It now lives with us — unforgettable, like its creator.

© A participant from Estonia, 2020.

You may also wish to hang images of well-known leaders (young or old, local or international, from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds) around the space. Remind participants: all leaders begin somewhere, and this training could be the beginning of *their* journey.

🎵 At the end of the training, return to the avatars. Participants wear them on their backs, and others are invited to write positive farewell messages. A thoughtful soundtrack can deepen the

emotion of this closing ritual. Some participants cherish their avatar as much as a YouthPass certificate — a symbolic, multicultural keepsake of trust and belonging.



👋 *Final moments of recognition and farewell.*

Avatars created by participants at the beginning of the course returned for one last shared moment — full of reflections, comments, doodles, and cross-cultural appreciation.
Morocco, March 2021.

Establishing the Rules of Engagement

📋 Once the group is warmed up, introduce the ground rules. These are vital to creating a safe, respectful, and productive space. However, do not simply impose rules — co-create them.

Begin by sharing a short list of **core principles**, such as:

1. Phones on silent mode during sessions
2. Respect each speaker — no interruptions



3. Collaborate actively with others
4. Arrive on time
5. Everyone has the right to speak
6. We listen attentively to one another
7. No private conversations during group work
8. We take care of the group's wellbeing
9. Constructive feedback only — never personal attacks

👉 Next, divide participants into small groups and ask them to formulate 1–2 additional rules they feel are important. After 10–15 minutes, gather the suggestions, discuss them, and finalise a shared agreement on a flipchart, then post it visibly in the room.

This approach empowers the group to *own* the learning environment, and it makes the expectations clearer, particularly in culturally diverse groups where social norms may differ.

Privacy, Safety and the Chatham House Rule

📌 Creating a safe space also means setting clear boundaries around **confidentiality**. Explain the Chatham House Rule: what is shared in the training stays within the group.

This is *especially* crucial when working with participants from regions facing political repression, armed conflict, or discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, gender identity, or political views. Some may belong to vulnerable or persecuted groups. Clarify that:

- No one is to record or publish anything from the session without consent
- Participants' personal stories must be treated with care and respect
- Social media posting should be mindful, and ideally limited to general group moments

If needed, include a short video or story in the Welcome Reader to help participants understand the importance of protecting each other's voices.



 BBC Newsnight report about Mark Kennedy (aka Mark Stone), undercover policeman who infiltrated into human rights organisations.



 Scan to explore this video.

A powerful media resource used to discuss intercultural dilemmas, trust, and manipulation in democratic societies. So important now in 2025.

© BBC News.

The Value of Questions

? Remind participants that **asking questions is not only allowed — it's expected**. Training should never become a monologue. Participants must feel free to agree, disagree, question, clarify, or offer examples from their own lives.

However, not everyone will feel comfortable jumping in — especially in multicultural settings where language skills, confidence, or trauma may inhibit open participation. Create multiple channels for contribution:



- Small group discussions
- Written comments or sticky notes
- Anonymous question boxes
- Interactive games or role-play

🎯 Your role as a trainer is not to “teach” but to facilitate a living, evolving dialogue. Let the participants help shape the session. When they do, training becomes not only more dynamic — it becomes more *intercultural*.

By launching your training with creativity, empathy, and co-creation, you build a strong foundation for inclusive learning. From the first moments, participants feel seen, heard, and respected — and you, as a trainer, model the leadership values you wish to inspire.

The Meaning of Energisers

⚡ An energiser is a short, dynamic activity — usually lasting between 1 and 5 minutes — that revitalises participants, breaks monotony, and stimulates engagement. These playful, movement-based exercises are excellent for shifting energy, encouraging interaction, and fostering group cohesion. They help participants stretch, smile, and feel more present in the room.

When well-prepared, energisers can also reinforce the themes of the training. However, it’s important that they are always safe, inclusive, and culturally sensitive. What works in one group might not work in another — and it’s the trainer’s responsibility to be attentive to those differences.



⚡ *Participant-led energiser — and yes, everyone agreed on it.*

Sometimes the most meaningful energisers are suggested from within the group. When it works, it really works — and this one did.

Morocco, March 2021.

Safety, Inclusion and Cultural Sensitivity

🌍 When designing or selecting energisers, take great care to ensure:

- Activities are physically safe — no jumping over furniture or risky moves.
- There is no requirement for close physical contact, hugging, or touching. Even light touch can be uncomfortable or inappropriate for some, especially participants from religious, cultural or trauma-affected backgrounds.
- There is no pressure to participate in a way that could lead to embarrassment, exclusion, or discomfort.



- Every participant feels invited, but not forced — and has the option to *opt in* without fear of judgement.

If five or more participants are not engaging and instead stand on the sidelines, the energiser is not serving its purpose. It's essential that all feel welcome to join in — and that no one feels awkward or left out.

👏 A respectful facilitator also models *empathy over energy*. If a participant isn't joining in, consider what might be going on — fatigue, personal discomfort, a language barrier, or even fasting due to religious practice. Have alternatives ready and keep the atmosphere light-hearted and open.

Freedom of Choice and Initiative

🎯 Rather than dictating each energiser or activity, try offering **choices**. Say something like: “Here are three energisers — would you prefer something physical, something funny, or something reflective?” This empowers participants, makes them feel respected, and subtly models democratic leadership.

Even better — invite participants to suggest energisers themselves. For example, in one of our sessions, a participant offered to lead a short morning yoga session before the first training block. It became a cherished daily ritual that increased focus, warmth, and unity.

🌀 Empowering participants to shape the training process deepens their sense of ownership and participation. Just be sure to approve suggestions beforehand to ensure alignment with the theme, tone, and accessibility of the programme.



 Morning yoga to welcome the day.

Before the first session even started, a few mindful breaths, stretches, and shared silence helped these young leaders align focus and wellbeing.

Spain, August 2022.

Creative Approaches to Group Work

 Avoid mechanical methods like counting off: “1-2-3-4-5...” Instead, use *creative, thematic* ways to divide participants into groups. For instance:

- Distribute cards featuring famous philosophers or intercultural concepts, and ask participants to find others with similar themes.
- Use illustrations, quotes or artworks — participants must find matches or categories and form groups based on those.
- Share five book titles or historical leaders — each participant joins the group that resonates most with them.



These approaches don't just sort people — they spark curiosity, conversation, and reflection, all while subtly reinforcing the training content.



 A set of visual cards for forming groups and energising sessions.

Used in early stages of the training to spark curiosity, connect personalities, and gently ease participants into intercultural group dynamics.

© Capt'n Sarky. COPPENRATH VERLAG, Münster.





 *Art cards as conversation starters and group builders.*

Symbols and images that invite storytelling across cultures — allowing participants to express their identities without relying solely on language.

© Memo Muva. Governatorato SCV, Direzione dei Musei.



 *Philosophical cards to fuel intercultural thinking.*

Used mid-training to dive deeper into critical discussions, introduce intercultural frameworks, and provoke passionate, respectful debates.

© Toumpis, Publications and Graphic Arts.



© *Mythic storytelling cards for advanced intercultural tasks.*

These beautiful, complex cards helped shape the final stage of training, used in deep role plays and simulation games — encouraging both strategic thinking and imagination.

© Sarah Young. A Mythic Storytelling Game.



Give Time to Digest

🕒 One of the most overlooked — yet powerful — facilitation skills is knowing when *not* to speak.

Imagine you've just shown a profound video clip — one that touches on injustice, leadership, or trauma. The lights go up, and someone immediately says, "So, what did you think?" That's too soon.

💡 Let participants sit in silence. Let the final scene settle. Let the soundtrack complete. Then, only after a few minutes, gently ask, "Shall we bring back the lights?" And from there, slowly invite their reflections.

Great moments in training require *emotional space*. They allow participants — especially those with lived experience of conflict, discrimination, or exclusion — to process their reactions before speaking.



🎬 A black-and-white masterpiece in eleven minutes.

Tričko (The T-Shirt) was shown during an evening reflection. A visually simple but emotionally loaded film that left no participant untouched.



 Scan to explore this video.

© Future Shorts. Dir: Hossein Martin Fazeli.

 Once, in a session on intercultural choices in conflict situations, a Moldovan participant named Veronica quietly asked to rewind the video. She pointed out a single phrase, missed by everyone else, which redefined the whole narrative. That's the kind of deep learning that only happens when trainers honour the space between stimulus and response.

Training as a Space for Art, Empathy and Polymathy

 Training is not just about structure and outcomes — it's a space for exploration, emotional resonance, and intellectual expansion. Intercultural leadership requires more than just managerial skills; it calls for *moral imagination*, *creative thinking*, and *deep empathy*.

This is why the second half of the training — when trust is established and the group is ready — is ideal for **multi-layered challenges**:

- Present a task linked to real-world intercultural dilemmas.
- Introduce new concepts through video excerpts, philosophical ideas, or symbolic art cards.
- Divide into groups and ask each to work independently, then bring them together for a joint presentation and collective action plan.

This approach nurtures both individual voice and collaborative strategy — core traits of youth intercultural leaders.

Short, Reflective Assignments

 Especially in residential trainings or remote locations, the learning doesn't have to end with the last session. If the topic is intense — like bullying, discrimination, or personal responsibility — use that momentum.

After a particularly engaged discussion, you might send a thoughtful message to the group chat:



"Thank you for today's powerful dialogue. If you feel inspired, I invite you to reflect overnight — how would you explain what we've discussed today to someone in your community who doesn't know what intercultural leadership is? Bring your thoughts to tomorrow's session — in any form: words, sketches, questions, or stories."

This gentle "home task" keeps the conversation alive, deepens commitment, and reminds participants that leadership doesn't pause at sunset.

Through well-designed energisers, creative methods, empathetic pacing, and inclusive dialogue, you transform a training into something greater — a shared journey. By blending rigour with emotion, structure with freedom, and reflection with action, you give participants not only skills, but also the inspiration and confidence to lead.



🧠 *A four-layered exercise in critical thinking.*

One of our favourite educational combinations: mythic card, scholarly portrait (can you name them?), a frame from a well-known series, and a surprising quote. All woven into one logic challenge. In the background: the wall of participant avatars.

Poland, January 2023.



Reflective Assignments in Context

After a day rich in discussion and emotional exchange, especially when addressing sensitive topics such as bullying or youth exclusion, it's often helpful to continue the learning in a reflective and personal space. One example comes from a previous training session focused on youth leadership and bullying, where I sent the following message to the WhatsApp group in the evening:

Dear friends,

As we discussed today, bullying is one of the key factors that may divert a potential young leader from their path. In some cases, parents resort to bold and dramatic methods to "correct" their children's behaviour. These methods often provoke polarised reactions within the wider community of parents, educators and psychologists.

Please take a moment to watch the two short videos I've linked here. They illustrate examples of such approaches.



 *A father's lesson on consequences.*

This widely debated clip was used to launch discussions on parenting, youth ethics, and power. It always provokes more questions than answers.



 Scan to explore this video.

© Bryan Thornhill; Daily Mail.

After viewing, I kindly ask you to reflect on the following:

1. *Do you find these methods appropriate?*
2. *How would you feel if you were treated like this in childhood?*
3. *Do you think gender plays a role in how these methods are used or received?*
4. *Was it intercultural to make these disciplinary actions public? What about the child's right to privacy?*
5. *Could such methods increase the risk of early school leaving instead of preventing it?*
6. *Do you agree with the statement "a parent is not a friend"? Would you consider yourself a friend to your own child?*
7. *What are your thoughts on parental punishment in general — where is the line between discipline and harm?*
8. *If your child was repeatedly involved in bullying, how would you respond?*

Thank you all for your reflections and contributions — they are truly valued.

Such reflective tasks allow participants to engage more deeply with complex intercultural dilemmas, encouraging them to examine their own values, biases, and possible leadership approaches. They also give space to voices that may need more time to formulate a response, especially participants for whom English is not the first language or who may need emotional distance before engaging fully.



The Role of Arts and Drama in Training

🎭 Artistic and dramatic exercises offer a powerful pathway for expression, empathy and trust-building. They go far beyond 'play' — they allow participants to *feel* their way into concepts of leadership, inclusion, power and vulnerability. Non-verbal expression, especially through movement, is a deeply inclusive method. It transcends language barriers and welcomes participants who may feel less comfortable speaking openly.



📱 Scan to explore: Theatre of the Oppressed – Augusto Boal





👐 *Trust, laughter, and the fall.*

A group favourite: this arts and drama-based exercise is about letting go, trusting others, and laughing together. Cultural differences fade when someone catches you mid-air.

Poland, January 2023.

In my experience, one of the most effective approaches involved the use of **Teatro do Oprimido** (Theatre of the Oppressed), an interactive methodology created by Augusto Boal. This was implemented during the training course *“Body and Minds in Action”* in Struga, North Macedonia (November 2017).

At a certain point, I invited participants to take over facilitation. One such session was led by Jelena Cistjaka, a talented artist and professional dancer from Latvia. Her kinesthetic workshop focused on exploring physicality, gravity and mutual trust — drawing on her training at the *“Laboratory of Kinesthetic Learning”* in Aluksne, Latvia.

Here is a summary of her beautifully structured session:

1. “Morning Hug” – Awareness and Grounding

👐 Participants walked freely around the room, making eye contact with others as they moved. On the first clap, they were to hug the nearest person and hold it until a second clap was heard, then resume walking. This created connection, built awareness of space, and served as a gentle emotional warm-up.

2. “Finding Gravity” – Understanding Stability

🧘 Working in pairs, Person A stood with slightly bent knees. In the first scenario, A tensed all muscles; in the second, A relaxed and shifted focus to their centre of gravity (below the navel). Person B tried to move them. This allowed participants to explore balance and inner focus.

3. “Gravity Hand” – Leading with Trust

👐 In pairs, the leader placed their hand on the partner’s gravity centre (lower back). The partner closed their eyes and followed subtle directional cues. This required and built deep trust, active listening and body awareness. Clear physical communication was essential.

4. “Human Balloons” – Collective Responsibility

🎈 Half of the group acted as “balloons” (eyes closed), while the other half acted as “senders” and “receivers”. Balloons were passed gently from one person to the next, with hands guiding the centre of gravity. The exercise stressed cooperation, safety, eye contact and care.

5. “Dance from the Head” – Trust and Creativity

🧘 With one hand on the forehead and one on the back of the head, leaders guided blindfolded partners through gentle movements. This created a dance-like experience — spontaneous, mutual and intuitive. It unlocked creativity and physical empathy.



6. “Flying” – Letting Go and Being Held

🕊️ A powerful final exercise. One participant, after confirming readiness, ran toward the group and jumped forward. The group caught and lifted them above their heads, supporting their gravity centre. After a few steps, they gently landed the flyer on their feet.

Key conditions:

- Ensure the group is prepared and ready.
- Ask permission and confirm everyone’s roles.
- Physically support the flyer’s centre (hips, shoulders).
- Maintain full attention — no distractions.



📱 Scan to explore: Simulation Game Example: UNHCR Roleplay

This final moment combined joy, freedom, trust and collective support. It served as a metaphor: intercultural leadership is about knowing when to leap, and trusting others to lift you when you do.

Final Reflections

🎨 Incorporating arts and drama into youth leadership training is not a decorative extra — it is central to holistic learning. These exercises build emotional intelligence, sharpen perception, and develop non-verbal communication — all of which are vital to inclusive leadership.

Importantly, ensure that no participant feels forced or exposed during these activities. Cultural and personal boundaries must be respected at all times. Allow space for observers, slow joiners and those who may need time to warm up to physical expression.

By combining kinaesthetic learning, reflection, creativity and trust, we transform the training space into a safe laboratory for growth — one where young people don’t just talk about leadership, they *live* it through body, mind and emotion.

Simulation Games in Training

🎮 Simulation games are one of the most dynamic, transformative tools available in non-formal education. They allow participants to engage with complex real-life challenges in a structured,



interactive environment — without the risk of real-world consequences. By assuming the roles of various actors, participants explore moral dilemmas, power relations, conflicting interests, and opportunities for peaceful resolution and compromise.

We place high value on the use of simulation games as a means of linking **active citizenship**, **human rights education**, and **youth participation**. When carefully designed and sensitively facilitated, simulations can offer participants the rare opportunity to test leadership, empathy, negotiation, and problem-solving in lifelike conditions that are emotionally and intellectually engaging.

What is a Simulation Game?

A simulation game replicates a real-world scenario — simplified, but recognisable — and invites participants to take on roles that mirror those of real actors in political, social, or historical settings. It combines:

1. **Simulation** – A model of reality, always an abstraction, never fully objective, but designed to focus attention on key mechanisms (e.g. conflict, power, negotiation).
2. **Role Play** – Participants actively shape the unfolding of the scenario by performing roles with specific perspectives, needs and strategies.
3. **Rules** – Interaction is guided by a clear structure. For example:
 - Meetings occur only within designated alliances or round tables.
 - Communication must be written and submitted via official forms.
 - Media outputs such as press releases shape public narrative.

🎯 Simulation games follow the “learning by doing” principle — encouraging trial, error, and reflection. Unlike passive learning, they immerse participants in decision-making under pressure, interpersonal tension, and moral complexity.

Educational Purpose and Learning Goals

Before implementing any simulation, it is essential to clarify the **educational aims**. These may include:

- Establishing meaningful contact between unfamiliar groups.
- Encouraging critical reflection and perspective-shifting.
- Fostering empathy and emotional intelligence.



 Scan to explore: Intercultural Communication Adventure

- Deepening motivation and thematic understanding.
- Exploring institutional or historical frameworks through lived experience.
- Practising negotiation, diplomacy and collective problem-solving.
- Enhancing teamwork and strategic thinking.
- Cultivating self-awareness — especially under pressure or in conflicting roles.

 A key element of any simulation is the invitation to **step into someone else's shoes**. This is particularly relevant in intercultural or interfaith contexts, where role reversal and imaginative engagement can lead to powerful insights.

Cultural Sensitivity and Emotional Readiness

 Trainers must always be aware of the emotional impact of simulation games — particularly when dealing with participants from culturally, religiously, or politically diverse backgrounds. Some participants may have direct or intergenerational experience of conflict, discrimination or displacement. The emotional weight of simulation must be taken seriously:

- **Avoid roles that require participants to act out trauma** (e.g. torture victims, persecutors, sexual violence survivors).
- **Allow opt-out options** without penalty or pressure.
- **Brief and debrief** extensively — what may seem like “just a game” to one participant can be deeply affecting to another.
- **Monitor dynamics carefully** — for power imbalances, stereotyping, or microaggressions during the role-play.
- **Provide emotional support** — either through one-on-one check-ins or peer support teams.

Inclusivity must be modelled at every stage. Make sure your instructions and materials are accessible to all participants, especially those with lower language fluency or special needs.

A Sample Simulation: ‘When Two Worlds Collide’

 One of our most impactful and widely tested simulation games is titled *When Two Worlds Collide*. Inspired by a real and deeply controversial political conflict in Switzerland in 2009, the



simulation explores the intersections of **migration, media, religion, ethnicity, democratic abuse,** and **international relations.**



■ *Outside the classroom, into the story.*

Participants step into the roles of asylum seekers for a simulation game tackling the 2015 EU refugee crisis. Cold wind, uncertainty, improvisation — learning through empathy. Macedonia, November 2017.

The game has been successfully implemented during Erasmus+ youth exchanges and training courses across Europe and beyond. After each implementation, participant feedback has been collected and analysed to refine and improve the experience.

To preserve the element of surprise — and prevent participants from researching the real-life case too early — the simulation uses a **fictional country** and **invented group names**. The roles and power dynamics are reversed from the real scenario, inviting participants to enter the mindset of the “other” and experience what it means to hold marginal or majority power, negotiate visibility, or defend values under pressure.

Each participant is assigned a role from a wide spectrum of actors, such as:

- Asylum seekers and displaced minorities
- Government ministers and members of parliament
- Media representatives



- NGO activists
- Religious leaders
- Local businesspeople
- Police officials
- Right-wing or populist groups
- International observers

The simulation then unfolds through structured rounds of negotiations, debates, lobbying, press interventions and shifting alliances — all culminating in a decision-making phase where participants must vote on a proposed policy or resolution.

Why Simulate?

🎭 Simulation games offer a safe space to explore dangerous ideas — where missteps don't carry real-life consequences, but do lead to real learning. They make abstract principles concrete. They connect theory to emotion. And they reveal leadership not only as a skill, but as a series of intercultural choices.

By creating a temporary world governed by fairness, roles, and reflection, we prepare young people to make real choices in the real world — with more wisdom, humility and resilience.

Before You Start: Checklist for Simulation Planning

- ✅ Use the following checklist to prepare your simulation game:
 1. **Overall topic** – What issue or dilemma is at the heart of the game?
 2. **Learning goals** – What do you want participants to understand or develop?
 3. **Problem scenario** – What conflict or situation are participants trying to address?
 4. **Setting and context** – What kind of world are you placing them in?
 5. **Role profiles** – Are all roles relevant, respectful and clear?
 6. **Materials** – Have you prepared guides, backgrounders, action forms, and media tools?
 7. **Rules of engagement** – Are they inclusive, easy to follow, and appropriate?
 8. **Timing** – Is there enough time for reflection, group work, action, and debriefing?
 9. **Debrief** – What questions will you ask to support processing and synthesis?

🌐 Simulation games, when done with care and intention, are not just educational tools — they are *intercultural mirrors*. They give young people the space to experiment with leadership,



compromise, and resistance. They show what it means to act, to hesitate, to listen, and to lead. For participants from diverse and potentially marginalised backgrounds, simulations offer not only insight, but also a rehearsal for change.

In every round, a new world is imagined — and possibly, a new intercultural leader is born.

Simulation Scenario: ‘When Two Worlds Collide’ – The Case of Contraria

🌐 In the Union of Contrarian Provinces (UCP), also known simply as **Contraria**, peaceful coexistence is both a historical achievement and a national value. The country is home to several dominant ethnic groups, unified by a shared religion but differing in language, customs, and regional identities. Despite these differences, Contrarians have lived in harmony for centuries, taking pride in their social cohesion.

However, tensions have recently emerged. A small **minority group of foreign origin** — distinct in language, clothing, culinary traditions, and religious beliefs — has become increasingly visible and vocal. They are primarily settled in specific districts and have established a few religious temples in the shape of a snake egg, leading the local population to colloquially refer to them as “Templars.” Though the group consists of diverse ethnicities, they are united by a unique religion.

🏛️ Several snake-egg temples were built some 30–40 years ago, but the Templar community is now requesting **more temples** — and taller ones. Moreover, they seek to perform **daily spiritual dances** with loud, unfamiliar music featuring an exotic instrument called the saxophone. This has sparked significant controversy. The style of these temples contrasts sharply with traditional Contrarian architecture, and the use of music and dance in public rituals is considered culturally alien.

Public sentiment is divided. Fears are fuelled by international incidents where individuals claiming affiliation with Templar communities in other countries have committed serious offences. Some Contrarians worry about urban disruption and cultural erosion. Others accuse the government of failing to uphold national values. Under pressure from right-wing factions, a movement has emerged calling for a **constitutional referendum** that would prohibit the construction of snake-egg temples entirely.

🗣️ Before this national referendum takes place, a **multi-stakeholder dialogue** has been organised — involving youth, local leaders, human rights organisations, religious representatives, and policy experts. This is where the simulation begins.

The Aim of the Simulation

This simulation asks participants to step into the roles of those on all sides of the conflict: minority activists, conservative politicians, young voters, journalists, human rights lawyers, city planners, and more. The game challenges them to explore complex and often uncomfortable tensions



between religious freedom, cultural preservation, urban development, media influence, and national identity.



 Scan to explore: Intercultural Communication Skills

 Participants will engage in negotiations, public hearings, media releases and confidential lobbying — with the aim of reaching either a policy compromise or a breakdown of consensus. It's not about “winning” — it's about understanding the dynamics of social conflict, leadership under pressure, and intercultural decision-making in pluralistic societies.

Cultural Sensitivity

Trainers must ensure the game is introduced with care and explained clearly to all participants. The roles may be challenging — especially for participants with refugee or migrant backgrounds, or those who belong to real-life minority groups. Emotional safety is paramount.

 Before launching the simulation:

- Clearly explain that this is a **fictionalised scenario**.
- Offer opt-out or observer roles to those who feel uncomfortable.
- Ensure that **no real-life religion or ethnicity is named** or targeted.
- Emphasise the educational purpose: *to promote empathy, dialogue, and reflection*.

Feedback and Evaluation

 Continuous reflection is a vital part of effective training. Throughout your programme — particularly after emotionally intense activities like simulations — create structured opportunities for participants to give and receive feedback.

There are several feedback phases:

Daily Reflection Circles

End each training day with small group discussions where participants can share what stood out for them, what challenged them, and what they'd like to see improved. Each group selects a representative to deliver a summary to the trainers.

Midway Evaluation

For multi-day trainings, hold a general review in the middle. This helps adjust the programme based on participant feedback and ensures any misunderstandings or frustrations are addressed before they escalate.



◆ Final Feedback

At the end of the training, collect immediate feedback — ideally in both **written and structured formats**. Some participants prefer open-form reflection, while others engage more with survey-style checkboxes and Likert scales. Use both where possible.

◆ Post-Training Feedback

Within a few days of the event, send an online form for additional feedback. Not all participants will complete it, but those who do often offer deeper, more reflective insights.

💡 Remember: feedback is not only for you. It helps participants process their experience, identify growth areas, and feel that their voices continue to matter — even after the closing session.



● “Cappuccino with tears, please.”

Stakeholders deliver their final arguments after a high-intensity simulation about human rights and labour in the global coffee industry. The result? Sadly close to reality.
Spain, December 2019.



Thank You Letter

♥ After the training, take time to write a sincere thank-you letter to your participants and partners. This small gesture leaves a lasting impression. Your letter should be heartfelt, respectful, and no longer than one page.

For example (a very brief one):

Dear friends,

Thank you — not only for attending our training but for investing your energy, openness, and the precious time of your youth in this shared journey. Your willingness to challenge yourselves, support one another, and reflect critically has made this training truly meaningful.

I am especially grateful for the care, creativity, and honesty you brought to each activity. We began as individuals — some strangers, some friends — and finished as a learning community. Thank you for your trust and your courage.

A warm thank-you also goes to our wonderful partners who supported this event — your commitment made everything possible.

This is not goodbye. Our learning continues, and our connection remains.

*With gratitude,
[Your Name]*

Be sure to double-check names, emails, and spelling — especially for individualised messages. One mistake can inadvertently exclude or hurt a participant.

Post-Event Reader

📖 One of the most valuable ways to extend the impact of your training is through the creation of a **Post-Event Reader**. This resource, shared digitally with participants after the training, should provide in-depth materials for those who want to continue learning.

Unlike the pre-training “Welcome Reader,” this library should be more **academic and text-based**, with a focus on building critical thinking and research capacity.

You may include:

- Academic articles and journal publications



- Policy briefs and legal documents
- Historical analyses and case studies
- Court rulings or human rights reports
- Thematic book chapters or selected monographs
- Key declarations, treaties and official statements
- Bibliographies for further reading

📁 Organise the library into **clearly labelled folders** or thematic clusters. This makes it easier for participants to navigate and encourages focused exploration. For example:

- Folder 1: Religion and Minority Rights
- Folder 2: Urban Space and Cultural Conflict
- Folder 3: Simulation and Conflict Resolution
- Folder 4: Leadership, Law and Ethics
- Folder 5: Suggested Research Topics

🔍 Many young people are curious but overwhelmed by the vastness of the Internet. By pre-selecting and grouping relevant materials, you save them time, reduce confusion, and boost their confidence to dive deeper into academic exploration. You also promote scientific thinking and contribute to a culture of **lifelong learning**.

Through well-structured simulation, intentional reflection, sincere appreciation, and long-term support, trainers can offer participants not just a training — but a profound experience. One that supports leadership, empathy, resilience, and responsibility in a diverse and ever-changing world.

Example from a Previous Training – Post-Training Reader

📧 My dear graduates,

Following this link: [\[insert link\]](#)

you'll find access to the promised **Post-Training Digital Library** — a rich and carefully curated collection of almost everything referenced, requested, or relevant to our course.



 Scan to explore: Intercultural Communication Course

*This extensive archive contains over **1,000 resources** — including monographs, academic articles, doctoral dissertations, philosophical essays, European Court of Human Rights and International Court of Justice decisions, an unusual handwritten manuscript, a deeply stirring song, and several inspiring novels and short stories.*

 *All materials are grouped into **124 thematic folders** so you can choose to download only what interests you — or, if you're feeling brave, access the full 4.33 GB archive as a whole.*

Should anything be missing, or if you need a specific resource, don't hesitate to let me know — some of you have already received additional documents based on your personal learning goals, and I'm happy to continue supporting you in this way.

Why So Much on Collective Action?

Some of you might be surprised by the volume of resources related to politics, leadership, and collective decision-making. This was a conscious choice.

 *In recent years, we've seen a growing individualism within youth movements. While self-development is essential, the capacity for **joint action** is equally vital — and increasingly rare. If we are to address the challenges of inequality, climate injustice, corporate overreach, or systemic exclusion, we must re-learn the art of **institutional thinking**: how to act not just critically, but collaboratively.*

This library is an invitation to reflect — not only on how to lead but on how to lead together.

I truly hope that these resources accompany you on the next stages of your journey — whether academic, activist, professional, or deeply personal.

See you in action,

— Kirill



Conclusion: The Beginning of the Journey

🌍 Taking a training course seriously — and approaching its preparation, delivery, and evaluation with care — does far more than tick project boxes. It equips young people with skills that matter: *intercultural reasoning, strategic thinking, cultural sensitivity*, and the *emotional intelligence* to navigate today's complex world.

By investing your time and energy wisely, you do not only meet the formal aims of your Erasmus+ project. You help seed the ground for meaningful, sustainable, and diverse forms of leadership to flourish — across borders, beliefs and backgrounds.

Through shared learning and thoughtful practice, we spread tested methods, powerful ideas, and real human connections across all corners of the Erasmus+ community.

💖 *Dear reader*, I hope that this brief manual has been a worthwhile investment of your precious time — and that it brings meaningful dividends, both to you and to those you work with.



📱 Scan to explore: Cross-Cultural Communication (Wikipedia)

Your constructive feedback is always welcome. Please feel free to share your thoughts so I can improve future editions and better serve our shared purpose.

Until next time — onwards with empathy, courage, and clarity.



 *A quiet finale with soil and purpose.*

Tree planting marked the final stage of an environmental leadership training — where commitment to the planet became a personal and collective gesture.

Cyprus, October 2019.



Useful tips

Intercultural Submerging for Trainers: Becoming More Than an Observer

🌍 Intercultural competence is not a checklist — it is a lived experience. In non-formal education, particularly when working with culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse participants — including young people with refugee or migrant backgrounds — the trainer's role is not simply to facilitate, but to *embed*, to *immerse*, and to *care*.

One of the most transformative tools a trainer can adopt is what we might call **intercultural submerging** — a deep, empathetic, and respectful engagement with the lived realities of the participants, not from above, but from *within*.

From Observation to Participation

👣 True intercultural learning starts by stepping into another's world — not for a moment of celebration or ceremony, but through **sustained and humble involvement**. A culturally sensitive trainer does not arrive as a guest expecting a welcome; they arrive willing to observe, listen, and learn — with sincerity.

Rather than limiting cultural understanding to surface-level markers (festivals, food, flags), effective trainers:

- Accept invitations into everyday life — joining families for meals, attending community events not listed in official itineraries.
- Visit neighbourhoods where participants live — not just the polished venues, but real spaces where culture is lived and negotiated.
- Observe quiet, daily rituals — not only religious holidays but early morning routines, family dynamics, or moments of rest and prayer.

🏠 One particularly powerful learning moment for me came not during a public celebration, but while sitting in a kitchen in a refugee-hosting community in Sicily, shelling almonds with two sisters from Eritrea. It was in that silence, amidst smells of coffee and cardamom, that I learned more about intergenerational trauma and resilience than in any seminar room.



Knowing Their Voices, Not Just Their Names

 A culturally competent trainer takes the time to explore the intellectual, artistic and spiritual voices that shape participants' identities — **not as exotic curiosities**, but as valid, vibrant contributors to global discourse.

That means:

- Watching films made by or about their communities.
- Reading authors they respect — whether literary giants or local poets.
- Listening to the music they grew up with — even if it means leaving your usual playlists behind.
- Following public figures, social commentators, comedians, or religious thinkers who influence their worldview.

 Once, after referencing a well-known Western thinker in a workshop on leadership, I was gently challenged by a participant from Morocco who asked: *“Have you read Assia Djébar? She writes about the same thing, but from inside our skin.”* That moment reshaped the curriculum I had brought — and the curriculum I now carry.

Learning the Language of Respect

 Language opens more than conversation — it opens hearts. Even learning a few basic phrases in the participants' native languages shows humility and a genuine desire to connect.

Learn how to say:

- Hello, goodbye, thank you
- How are you?
- I don't understand, can you help me?
- Your name is beautiful
- Would you like to share?

Small phrases, spoken with care, can mean a world to someone whose voice often goes unheard. Don't be afraid to ask for help pronouncing names properly — doing so builds trust and shows respect.

 One of my Roma participants in Hungary once said: *“You're the first trainer who didn't just call me by a shortened version. You said my name in full, and I felt I belonged in the room.”*



Cultural Proximity Without Appropriation

☼ There is a fine line between immersion and intrusion. Trainers must always approach with humility. Ask for consent. Recognise the difference between cultural learning and cultural borrowing. Do not romanticise suffering or mystify religious or ethnic practices.

If invited into a ritual space — whether sacred, personal, or collective — enter with reverence, not performance. If a participant shares a painful story, don't turn it into a metaphor. If someone offers a correction, thank them sincerely.

Navigating Misunderstandings with Grace



When people of diverse backgrounds come together, misunderstandings will happen. A culturally sensitive trainer does not fear conflict — they prepare for it:

- Learn the possible **interpersonal triggers** that may arise from differences in gender norms, authority perception, humour, physical contact, or communication style.
- Acknowledge potential **trauma histories**, especially among participants with refugee or conflict-zone backgrounds.
- Create safety protocols — like anonymous feedback, opt-out mechanisms, and regular emotional check-ins.
- Encourage participants to speak up if something feels off — and respond with *listening*, not defensiveness.

And if you make a mistake — and you will — own it with honesty, apologise without excuses, and invite dialogue.

Living the Values We Teach

🌱 We often speak of empathy, active listening, inclusive leadership, and human rights. But these are not just topics to teach — they are *ways to be*. The trainer who has shared a simple meal in a participant's home, who has stumbled through greetings in their native tongue, who has cried at their poetry or danced to their music — that trainer is no longer just a facilitator.

They are a bridge. A witness. A companion.

And this — more than any perfect agenda or clever energiser — is what truly transforms non-formal education: the human presence of a trainer who shows up fully, not as an expert, but as a learner among learners.



Final Note

🌍 Cultural submerging is not about collecting stories or performing allyship. It's about cultivating solidarity through presence. In a world that increasingly divides, the Erasmus+ trainer's task is not only to deliver programmes — but to embody a pedagogy of dignity, shared humanity, and radical respect.

True training begins not when we start speaking — but when we begin listening.

Setting Up an Intercultural Database for Effective Non-Formal Education

📁 In the context of non-formal education — particularly within intercultural, refugee- or migrant-sensitive environments — the trainer is not only a facilitator of sessions but also a curator of knowledge. One of the most practical and impactful tools a trainer can build is a comprehensive **Intercultural Database**. This collection, both digital and physical, serves as a living archive of resources, voices, tools, and cultural references that enhance relevance, depth, and sensitivity in training.

Let's explore how to create and manage such a database — not just as a file system, but as a meaningful investment in equity, representation, and learning.

Why Create an Intercultural Database?

🌍 When working with participants from culturally and religiously diverse backgrounds — including those with refugee or migrant experiences — one-size-fits-all training resources often fail to connect. Trainers must be able to adapt swiftly: referencing authors participants recognise, understanding local expressions of identity, or quickly finding a case study that matches the context of a young Roma woman from rural Romania just as easily as a Syrian engineering student in Berlin.

An intercultural database enables you to:

- Access **contextually appropriate materials** quickly
- Prepare **culturally sensitive sessions** in advance
- Provide participants with **readings and tools in multiple languages**
- Anticipate and **prevent cultural misunderstandings**
- Celebrate diversity without resorting to stereotypes



- Include **voices of underrepresented communities** in training content
- Respond to real-time needs — whether a poem in Kurdish or a legal precedent from Tunisia

Three Formats: Paper, HDD, and Cloud

1. Paper Archive – Tangible, Trusted, and Tactile

Yes, paper still matters — especially when working in areas with limited internet access, unstable electricity, or with participants unfamiliar with digital platforms.

What to include:

- Laminated infographics (in multiple languages)
- Multilingual glossaries of commonly misunderstood terms
- Folklore, proverbs or traditional narratives
- Cultural activity handouts or simulation role cards
- Print-outs of international conventions and legal documents
- Cultural timelines or histories of minority communities

Keep these well-organised in binders or accordion folders, grouped by region, theme, and target group.

 I once carried a small folder of traditional stories translated into three languages. In a youth camp in the Western Balkans, it became the evening's favourite session — because participants heard stories they'd grown up with, this time told in a different tongue.

2. HDD – The Portable Powerhouse

A well-organised **external hard drive (HDD)** is your backup brain. It can travel with you and serve when Wi-Fi fails or clouds are inaccessible. This is your offline library of everything you may ever need.

Recommended structure:

- Folder 1: *By Region* (e.g., Maghreb, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Sub-Saharan Africa)
- Folder 2: *By Identity* (e.g., LGBTQIA+, Roma, Refugee Youth, Religious Minorities)
- Folder 3: *By Theme* (e.g., Migration, Gender, Language Rights, Youth Participation)
- Folder 4: *Training Tools* (energiser videos, simulation kits, role cards)



- Folder 5: *Academic Corner* (articles, book excerpts, treaties, case law)
- Folder 6: *Languages and Expressions* (audio phrases, dialect guides, alphabets)

 Include songs, video interviews, news clips, scanned poetry, or children's drawings. They are more than files — they are cultural windows.



3. Cloud – The Living Library

An online cloud database — through Google Drive, Dropbox, **MEGA**, or your organisation's server — makes your intercultural archive **accessible, shareable, and expandable**.

Benefits:

- Easily update with new materials from participants' home regions
- Create shared folders for co-trainers or partner organisations
- Allow participants to contribute their own cultural content (with consent)
- Maintain backup copies of sensitive or valuable materials

Set up your cloud system to be user-friendly:

- Use visual icons for folders
- Label everything with short, clear titles
- Provide metadata (language, region, date) for easy searching
- Include simple instructions in English and another common language from your audience (e.g., Arabic, Ukrainian, or French)

 Always consider data privacy. Avoid uploading sensitive material without anonymising it or gaining consent. For example, don't include personal testimonies or vulnerable narratives unless explicitly agreed upon.

Essential Components to Include



Texts and Literature

- Articles by marginalised voices
- Localised histories, beyond colonial narratives
- Legal and social context of minority rights
- Stories from diasporas and oral traditions



Arts and Media

- Traditional music and dance videos
- Short films by youth collectives
- Documentaries on regional issues
- Comics, animations, and visual storytelling

Language and Expressions

- Lists of greetings, idioms and polite forms in different languages
- Audio clips of participants' names being pronounced
- Short cultural etiquette guides

Tools for Conflict Sensitivity

- Role cards for simulations featuring diverse perspectives
- Guides on non-violent communication
- Trauma-informed activity adaptations
- Handouts on religious holidays and rituals

Reference Frameworks

- UN Conventions
- Council of Europe recommendations
- Erasmus+ inclusion strategy documents
- Intersectional analysis frameworks

Trainer Tip: Let It Grow With You

 Your database is a living resource. After every training:

- Add new reflections, links, and voices you encountered.
- Ask participants to suggest materials or voices to include.
- Remove outdated or stereotyped content.
- Translate something new into another language, or find someone who can.

 After one training in Northern Sweden, a participant introduced me to a Sámi poet whose work now opens my session on environmental justice and indigenous resilience. Your participants are your co-creators.



Final Words

🔧 Building and maintaining an Intercultural Database is not just a technical task — it is an act of respect. It tells participants: *“You matter. Your culture matters. Your stories belong in this space.”*

In a world too often shaped by exclusion and erasure, this database becomes a quiet form of resistance — one that equips trainers to create **inclusive, informed, and emotionally intelligent educational spaces**.

Start small, stay consistent, and let the archive grow — as a testament to the diverse voices and visions that make Erasmus+ truly European, and truly human.

Five Common Sources of Misunderstanding in Culturally and Religiously Diverse Groups — and How to Address Them

🤝 In non-formal education, especially within Erasmus+ contexts, we work with richly diverse groups — bringing together participants from different regions, religions, migration backgrounds, and personal histories. While this diversity is a powerful strength, it also brings potential for misunderstandings or interpersonal tension.

As trainers, our task is to anticipate, prevent, and manage these moments with cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence and practical tools. Below are **five common sources of intercultural misunderstanding**, particularly in groups including participants from Muslim backgrounds (e.g. Syria, Palestine⁴), post-Soviet countries (e.g. Ukraine, Moldova, Russia), and other refugee or migrant contexts.

Each is followed by **realistic solutions** grounded in experience.

1. Physical Contact and Greetings: Shaking Hands, Touching, Personal Space

👐 *The situation:* A male participant extends his hand to greet a female participant from a Muslim background — and she politely declines, offering a nod or hand on chest instead. The male participant feels rejected or embarrassed. Alternatively, a female participant greets warmly with a hug, which may be too much for someone from a more formal or trauma-affected background.

💡 *Why it matters:* Many Muslim participants (men and women) avoid physical contact with the opposite sex outside their immediate family. Meanwhile, participants from Mediterranean or

⁴ Please keep in mind that there are many non-believers, atheists and Christians among students, asylum seekers and refugees from these countries and other states widely presumed as totally Muslim. **Be very careful not to ascribe identities.**



Eastern European countries may show warmth through physical closeness, while some with refugee backgrounds may be hyper-vigilant around touch due to past trauma.

✓ **Trainer actions:**

- Include a short intercultural note at the beginning: *“Not everyone expresses greeting or gratitude the same way — handshakes, bows, hand-over-heart, or verbal-only greetings are all valid and respectful.”*
- During icebreakers, **use non-contact options** (e.g. eye contact and smiles, name cards, group drawings).
- Model inclusive behaviour: if someone does not shake hands, respond with a nod and warmth — no pressure.

2. Fasting, Prayer, and Food-Related Differences

 **The situation:** During Ramadan, a Muslim participant is fasting. The group schedules lunch activities or energisers requiring physical exertion, and someone offers food or coffee without knowing. In another case, pork or alcohol is served at a celebration, or food is not halal or vegetarian.

 **Why it matters:** For many, religious practice around food and fasting is non-negotiable. Being misunderstood can lead to embarrassment or withdrawal. For others, food is central to cultural celebration — and being “refused” can feel personal.

✓ **Trainer actions:**

- Ask for dietary needs in advance and respect them meticulously.
- Acknowledge fasting in daily announcements: *“Some of our friends are fasting today — thank you for being mindful.”*
- Offer opt-out options during physically demanding tasks.
- Avoid evening alcohol at group events unless the entire group agrees.
- Provide quiet space for prayer and note it visibly on the schedule.
- Offer alternatives with equal dignity — not just “salad for the vegetarians.”



3. Gender Roles and Mixed Group Work

 *The situation:* A female trainer asks for mixed-gender pairs or discussions on gender equality. Some participants from conservative backgrounds express discomfort. Others, especially from more liberal regions, interpret this as sexism or resistance to human rights values. Tension rises.

 *Why it matters:* Participants may hold deeply rooted views on gender roles — shaped by culture, religion, or personal trauma. However, this does not necessarily mean they are unwilling to reflect or change. On the other hand, assumptions from more progressive participants can create judgment and isolation.

 Trainer actions:

- Frame gender discussions gently: *“Let’s explore how different societies shape our understanding of roles — and how we can listen, reflect, and engage together.”*
- Begin with storytelling or anonymous questions rather than direct confrontation.
- Use **rotating discussion groups** so no one feels permanently paired in discomfort.
- Include **positive models** from all regions (e.g. Muslim women activists, male caregivers).
- Check in individually if tension is visible — invite, don’t accuse.

4. Conflict Legacies and National Trauma

 *The situation:* A Ukrainian participant speaks about the war and displacement in their country. A Palestinian participant shares a similar story. A Syrian participant wants to tell their own — but tensions rise when someone perceives their story as politically controversial or feels their own suffering is being “compared” or minimised.

 *Why it matters:* Traumatic memories are often alive in youth from refugee or war-affected backgrounds. They carry complex emotions around identity, victimhood, and justice. If mishandled, discussions can become divisive.

 Trainer actions:

- Set ground rules: *“We listen to stories with respect — without competition or comparison.”*
- Use **parallel storytelling** activities: each participant reflects individually or in small, supportive groups.
- Never push for disclosure — but always validate lived experience.
- Offer *private channels* for sharing (e.g. journals, letters to self) if public sharing feels unsafe.



- If tension arises, pause the session and hold a restorative circle if needed.

5. Stereotypes, Humour, and Offensive Comments

 *The situation:* A joke is made about language, a religious symbol, or a political issue. It was meant to be light-hearted — but a participant feels hurt or offended. The group becomes awkward. The trainer hesitates: intervene or let it go?

 *Why it matters:* Humour is highly cultural. What's funny in one context may be deeply offensive in another. For participants who have experienced racism, discrimination, or exile, offhand comments — even in jest — can reopen wounds.

 *Trainer actions:*

- Early on, introduce a shared principle: *"Humour is welcome — but not at anyone's expense."*
- If a comment causes harm, gently redirect: *"Let's pause — I think that landed differently than intended."* Offer a private conversation later.
- Affirm those who speak up: *"Thanks for sharing how that felt. These moments help us grow."*
- Build in sessions on **intercultural communication** — including misunderstandings.
- Use "fishbowl" methods or theatre of the oppressed to explore subtle prejudice.

Final Thought

 Intercultural misunderstandings are not signs of failure — they are **opportunities for growth**. But only if handled with care, presence and humility.

The trainer's role is not to be an enforcer of perfect behaviour, but a cultivator of empathy. By preparing in advance, listening closely, and honouring the dignity of every participant, we create not only safer spaces — but stronger human bridges.

 When in doubt, choose dialogue over discipline. When hurt is felt, choose healing over haste. And when moments become uncomfortable — lean in, together. That's where real learning begins.



Test Yourself

Tasks for Intercultural Conflict Scenarios in Diverse Groups

🌐 Designed for Erasmus+ trainers working with participants from Pakistan, Morocco, Turkey and other culturally/religiously diverse or refugee/migrant backgrounds.

These realistic tasks help trainers practice identifying the root causes of conflict, anticipate misunderstandings, and respond with empathy and cultural intelligence.

Each scenario is followed by a set of 10 reflective questions that can be used individually, in peer coaching sessions, or in group supervision. Use them to build your personal "trainer's radar" for emotionally charged, misunderstood or sensitive situations.

Task 1: "I Didn't Understand the Instructions" – Language and Hidden Shame

📄 **Scenario:** You give detailed instructions in English for a simulation activity. A small group of participants, including two young men from rural Pakistan and a young woman from Morocco, seem confused but do not speak up. During the activity, they act out of sync with the others. Later, one participant privately tells you they felt embarrassed to ask because they didn't want to seem "stupid" in front of others.

🔗 **Focus:** Language barrier, saving face, fear of judgment.

📄 Reflective Questions:

#	Question
1	Why did this misunderstanding happen?
2	Could it have been predicted? How?
3	Were my instructions culturally accessible?
4	Did I check for understanding in more than one way?
5	What non-verbal cues did I miss that showed confusion?
6	Why might some participants feel shame in asking questions?



#	Question
7	What could I change in my facilitation style?
8	How might a peer-support method (buddy system) help here?
9	What visual aids or simplified language could I use next time?
10	How can I normalise “asking again” as a sign of strength?

Task 2: “It’s Too Much” – Fatigue, Religion and Overstimulation

 **Scenario:** Your training includes back-to-back activities. Around midday, a Turkish participant, who is fasting for religious reasons, seems withdrawn and irritated. A Moroccan participant quietly leaves during the third task. You notice this but continue. In the afternoon, several participants are no longer engaged. Tension rises during a discussion, and someone raises their voice unexpectedly.

 **Focus:** Religious fasting, physical fatigue, overstimulation, unspoken needs.

Reflective Questions:

#	Question
1	What signs of fatigue or disengagement did I notice?
2	Could I have anticipated this due to cultural/religious factors?
3	Did I create space for rest or quiet reflection during the schedule?
4	Was there an opportunity for participants to communicate needs safely?
5	Could energy levels be affecting interpersonal dynamics?
6	Did I prepare alternatives for participants who were fasting?
7	Was I relying too much on high-intensity methods?



#	Question
8	How could I have used music, silence or slower rhythm?
9	How will I adapt tomorrow's programme based on today?
10	What is my plan to repair and reconnect with the group?

Task 3: "He Said It as a Joke" – Humour, Stereotypes and Cultural Triggers

 **Scenario:** During a group debrief, a participant from Turkey makes a sarcastic joke about traditional gender roles. Another participant from a Western European country reacts strongly, saying the joke was sexist. The Turkish participant feels humiliated, saying, "It's just how we joke — you don't get it." Tension lingers in the group.

 **Focus:** Intercultural humour, gender sensitivity, hidden bias, conflict styles.

Reflective Questions:

#	Question
1	Why did this conflict emerge so suddenly?
2	Did I prepare the group for cultural humour and misinterpretation?
3	Could the joke reflect something deeper than humour?
4	How can I respect humour as a cultural form without allowing harm?
5	Was the reaction more about tone or content?
6	What might each participant be defending — values or identity?
7	How could I facilitate repair without taking sides?
8	Could a cultural storytelling exercise help unpack this?
9	What tools do I have to redirect tension into dialogue?



#	Question
10	How can I reframe this moment as a shared learning opportunity?

Task 4: “Why Do They Always Lead?” – Perceived Exclusion in Group Dynamics

 **Scenario:** You’ve run several sessions using group work. A participant from a Syrian background privately shares with you: “They never listen to us. It’s always the same two European guys who take charge.” You realise that leadership is being dominated by a few confident voices, and quieter or minority participants are not fully participating.

 **Focus:** Power dynamics, marginalisation, group hierarchy.

Reflective Questions:

#	Question
1	Why is this dynamic emerging in group work?
2	What do I know about cultural views on leadership and voice?
3	Have I supported equitable turn-taking?
4	How can I give quieter participants space without forcing them?
5	Is this about personality, power, or social comfort?
6	What small intervention could I try — e.g. rotating facilitators?
7	Could role cards or silent leadership be helpful?
8	What messages am I (unintentionally) reinforcing through facilitation?
9	Can I create smaller or identity-based subgroups for reflection?
10	How do I follow up with participants who feel unheard?



Task 5: “I’m Not Comfortable in This Role” – Triggering Simulation Content

 **Scenario:** You run a simulation where participants take roles representing different political actors. A young man from Morocco is assigned a role that indirectly references his country’s colonial history. He completes the task but avoids eye contact and becomes quiet. Another participant later tells you it felt “too personal” for him.

 **Focus:** Role-play ethics, emotional safety, trauma sensitivity.

Reflective Questions:

#	Question
1	Was this simulation too emotionally loaded?
2	Did I give enough context and consent before role assignment?
3	How could I provide alternatives without stigmatising opt-out?
4	Did I check in with participants before and after the role-play?
5	Was this topic too close to lived experience for some?
6	What debriefing tools do I use to process emotional weight?
7	Could participants co-create simulation scenarios in the future?
8	How can I validate discomfort without over-explaining?
9	What support channels (peer, private space) do I offer during intense sessions?
10	How can I revise the simulation to protect vulnerability while keeping the depth?

Final Tip

 *Each of these tasks is not just about what went wrong — but what went unspoken.* The best trainers are those who listen in the silence, who plan for the unexpected, and who hold the room with both structure and softness.



You can format these task sheets as printable handouts, insert them into a training-of-trainers guide, or use them in mentor-trainer dialogues. They are not about getting the “right answer” — they are about sharpening the reflexes of intercultural leadership.

Trainer’s Intercultural Preparedness Checklist (20 Points)

 For Erasmus+ Trainers Working with Culturally, Religiously, and Linguistically Diverse Youth

This checklist is designed to help trainers working in non-formal education settings assess and improve their readiness — particularly when engaging with participants from refugee, migrant, and minority backgrounds. It blends practical planning, cultural sensitivity, and emotional preparedness into one easy-to-use tool. Use this before, during, and after your training course to reflect, adapt, and grow.

 You can print this, copy into Word, or adapt it into your own digital tool.

	Item	Reflection Tip
1	I have mapped the cultural, religious, and linguistic composition of my group.	Who’s in the room? Don’t assume — ask, read, listen.
2	I reviewed potential religious observances , including prayer times and fasting.	Have I checked the calendar? Created quiet spaces?
3	I have researched the regional and social background of participants (e.g. rural, urban, conflict-affected).	What might be emotionally or politically sensitive?
4	I have gathered basic greetings and expressions in participants’ native languages.	Even “hello” and “thank you” in multiple languages builds bridges.
5	I planned a trauma-sensitive opening with low-pressure activities.	Who might feel overwhelmed on the first day?
6	I prepared a non-contact icebreaker option that avoids hugging, touching, or awkward intimacy.	Touch is cultural and can be triggering — offer alternatives.
7	I have included inclusive pronouns and diverse names in examples and materials.	Representation matters, even in worksheets.



✓	Item	Reflection Tip
8	I ensured that all printed and visual materials are easy to understand and culturally respectful.	Avoid jargon, and check images for bias or stereotypes.
9	I have a plan to check comprehension gently — especially where language barriers may exist.	“Does everyone understand?” isn’t enough. Use multiple channels.
10	I have anticipated potential conflict triggers and built space to debrief.	Topics like gender, migration, or politics may need safety nets.
11	I have strategies to balance dominant and quieter voices in group work.	Who always speaks? Who stays silent? Why?
12	I checked all materials, videos, and games for religious, ethnic, or gender insensitivity .	One careless joke can undo trust. Check twice.
13	I know how to respond to microaggressions or inappropriate humour with clarity and respect.	Correct with care — but don’t ignore harm.
14	I prepared structured moments of reflection to allow for emotional release.	Silence, journaling, or small circles can go a long way.
15	I created flexible roles in simulations or dramas to avoid assigning trauma-related characters .	No one should be forced to represent “the victim.”
16	I have a system for anonymous feedback or private check-ins .	Not every voice wants a microphone. Offer safe channels.
17	I planned for energy dips, overstimulation, and burnout — especially among fasting or neurodiverse participants.	Stretch breaks, slow moments, and hydration points help.
18	I have a list of conflict resolution strategies ready — from calming techniques to structured dialogue.	Role-play your own preparedness.
19	I reflected on my own biases, fears, and blind spots before entering the room.	What cultures do I assume I understand — but don’t?



	Item	Reflection Tip
20	I'm ready to learn from my participants , not just "teach" them.	Intercultural training is a two-way street. Arrive with humility.

☀️ *Remember:* this checklist is not just about logistics — it's about mindset. It helps create a space where difference is not a challenge, but a contribution.

🌈 Print it. Share it. Reflect on it with co-trainers. And update it after each training — based on what you've learned from real human encounters. That's what makes Erasmus+ so unique.

Trainer's Cultural Sensitivity Companion Table

☀️ *To be kept close during your Erasmus+ training journey*

Situation	Trainer's Prompt to Self	Suggested Action or Reflection
🌍 Entering a space with culturally diverse participants	<i>"What unspoken codes might exist here that I don't know yet?"</i>	Observe without rushing. Sit with the group before shaping the group.
👤 Participant avoids eye contact or physical contact	<i>"Am I seeing discomfort — or am I misreading a cultural norm?"</i>	Offer a respectful nod. Let them choose their mode of interaction.
🍽️ Group has mixed dietary needs or fasting participants	<i>"Is anyone sitting at the edge of this table — literally or symbolically?"</i>	Don't make food the centre of bonding. Offer inclusive rituals (music, storytelling).
🗣️ Someone's English is limited but they stay silent	<i>"How can I invite their voice without spotlighting their discomfort?"</i>	Use pair work, visual voting, or allow responses in their own language.
🧱 Unexpected silence after a sensitive session	<i>"Is this reflection, discomfort, or withdrawal?"</i>	Let the silence breathe. Then ask softly: "Would anyone like to check in?"



Situation	Trainer's Prompt to Self	Suggested Action or Reflection
 Participant refuses a role in a simulation	<i>"Is this about refusal — or about being emotionally unprepared?"</i>	Offer a different role or observer status. Thank them for setting a boundary.
 A debate becomes too heated	<i>"Do I need to protect a participant — or hold the space for tension?"</i>	Step in calmly. Acknowledge emotion, slow the tempo, offer a break.
 Same people speak up every time	<i>"What story is being told in this group — and who's missing from it?"</i>	Use "silent maps", rotating spokespersons, or anonymous cards.
 Participant appears disengaged	<i>"What could be happening beyond my view — fatigue, anxiety, language, past trauma?"</i>	Don't interpret silence as disinterest. Offer quiet tasks or personal creative work.
 Participant asks for time or space to pray	<i>"How do I make this normal without making it 'special'?"</i>	Treat it as you would a coffee break: expected, respected, non-dramatised.
 Trainer feels personally triggered by a participant's comment	<i>"Am I responding to them — or to something this reminds me of?"</i>	Pause. Breathe. Discuss with a co-trainer later if needed. Don't use the group as a mirror.
 A joke causes visible discomfort	<i>"Was it really funny for everyone — or only for some?"</i>	Name it gently. "That landed differently for different people. Let's unpack that."
 Materials prepared don't match group's needs	<i>"Do I adapt or stick with the plan?"</i>	Go off-script when needed. Relevance is more important than polish.
 Gender roles create tension in mixed-group activities	<i>"How can I introduce challenge without humiliation?"</i>	Use examples from different cultures. Frame gender as a system, not a blame game.
 Participant confides a private concern	<i>"How do I hold this respectfully — without becoming a rescuer?"</i>	Listen. Affirm. Direct them gently toward peer support or safe space.



Situation	Trainer's Prompt to Self	Suggested Action or Reflection
 After-lunch energy drops	<i>"Is now the time for pressure — or permission to slow down?"</i>	Invite stretching, music, drawing, or reflection. Not everything must be verbal.
 The group splits into sub-groups by language or background	<i>"Is this a comfort zone — or a barrier to integration?"</i>	Pair people across difference in soft ways. Avoid forced integration. Let trust grow.
 Using a powerful video or story	<i>"Have I allowed time for this to land?"</i>	Don't move on too fast. Let them sit with it. Invite post-video silence or journaling.
 Closing the day	<i>"Have all voices been heard — or just the loudest ones?"</i>	Offer anonymous reflection cards. End with an "I wish" or "I felt" round.
 Planning tomorrow	<i>"What did the group teach me today?"</i>	Don't just ask what <i>they</i> learned. Ask what <i>you</i> did. Write it down.

This table is designed not as a checklist to complete, but as a **dialogue with your own awareness** — a kind of emotional compass. You can expand, localise or translate it for your context, or keep it close as a gentle reminder that *training is not control — it is co-creation*.

Conclusion: From Preparedness to Presence

 If you've made it this far through the manual — reflecting, questioning, imagining — then you already know that intercultural training in Erasmus+ is not simply about methodology. It is about *mindset*. It's about what we prepare **before** the participants arrive, and how we stay **attuned** after the first icebreaker ends.

This manual has walked with you through the vital elements of being a culturally sensitive trainer in non-formal education settings: from how to manage complex group dynamics, to recognising the unspoken impact of trauma, to allowing room for silence, improvisation, humour, fatigue, dignity, and difference.

 But no manual can replace *you*. Your awareness. Your choices. Your presence. Your ability to see beneath the surface of a disagreement, or behind the hesitation of a participant who stays



quiet, not because they don't care — but because they are carefully watching how you treat others who are not like you.

 In a world often shaped by division and misunderstanding, Erasmus+ offers us something rare: the chance to sit in circles instead of corners. To listen before we respond. To challenge without humiliating. To share space with people who may never have spoken with each other if not for the very training you are about to deliver.

 You won't always get it right. There will be surprises, awkward moments, even small failures. But you are not asked to be perfect — you are asked to be *present*. To notice what's happening, adjust with care, and reflect with honesty.

This manual is not the end of your preparation — it is the beginning of a relationship. With your learners. With your fellow trainers. And with your own evolving identity as someone who teaches across borders — not only national ones, but cultural, emotional, generational, and experiential ones.

Thank you for stepping into this role with curiosity and courage.

See you — not only in action, but in *attention*.

Possible Weaknesses and Loving Limitations (with Room to Grow 🌱)

 Dear reader, if you've made it this far through our lovingly crafted manual, allow us a moment of self-reflection. No manual is flawless, least of all one that tries to capture the fluid dance of intercultural non-formal education. This document, like any good training session, is a work in progress — vibrant, imperfect, and open to dialogue.

Limitation #1: It's Not a Magic Cloak

While the manual is rich in examples, tools, and insights, it cannot magically prepare a trainer for the full spectrum of real-life emotional and cultural complexity — especially when facilitating groups with refugee or migrant backgrounds, where trauma, grief, and cultural expectations may collide unpredictably. We offer prompts, not potions.

Limitation #2: Cultural Sensitivity Is Not a Checkbox

We speak often (and fondly) of cultural sensitivity — but let's be honest. Even the best-prepared trainers may unintentionally misstep when navigating religious observance, gender norms, or communication taboos. Cultural humility, not perfection, must be our guide. If you feel awkward, that's good. It means you're learning.

Limitation #3: Conflict Is Not Always Curable by Cookies



Yes, we advocate for emotional safety and restorative dialogue — but some misunderstandings in diverse groups run deep. Trainers may face tensions rooted in histories of oppression, political trauma, or deeply internalised bias. A good checklist won't fix that. What will help? Courage, curiosity, and compassion (and, okay, maybe cookies too).

Limitation #4: Too Much Text, Not Enough TikTok?

Let's face it — not everyone learns best by reading 70-something pages of lovingly formatted advice. Some of your future colleagues might prefer a 30-second video, a podcast, or a WhatsApp voice note. This manual would love to evolve into something more multimedia — let us know if you want to co-create that with us. We have got memes ready.

Limitation #5: Not All Voices Are (Yet) Represented

This edition was born from our work in specific regional contexts — including the Mediterranean, Balkans, and Central Europe. It reflects that bias. We acknowledge the need for more voices — from the Caucasus, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the diaspora, and indigenous youth perspectives. Future editions must be braver and broader.

Fields for Further Exploration

- (a) Training the trainer: deepening emotional intelligence, trauma-informed care, and conflict transformation in intercultural youth settings.
- (b) Role-play upgrades: advanced simulation scripts that reflect intersectional issues (e.g., gender *and* religion, migration *and* special educational needs).
- (c) Arts-based diplomacy: building emotional bridges through theatre, dance, and visual storytelling from diverse traditions.
- (d) Digital literacy & intercultural safety: preparing participants for online misunderstandings in transnational youth spaces.
- (e) Co-creation with participants: what happens when your participants *write* the next chapter of the manual?

An Invitation, not a Full Stop

This manual is not a monument — it's a launchpad. If you, dear trainer or future partner, found something useful in these pages, imagine what we could build together.

 We warmly welcome proposals, collaborations, or just brave ideas for Erasmus+ KA1 or KA2 projects. Whether you're in Finland, Georgia, Tunisia, or beyond, let's create something that challenges, expands, and inspires our common educational mission.



 Write to us. Send us your participant stories, your unexpected group moments, your gentle critiques, your “aha” moments — and let’s grow this manual into a community.

After all, we’re not just bridging cultures. We’re building the next chapter — together.

 With warmth, humour, and a hopeful eye on the future,

–The Phoenix Knowledge Wings team



As we close...

For those eager to explore the deeper roots of our methods and frameworks, we invite you to browse a handpicked selection of books that have informed and inspired our work across diverse Erasmus+ trainings. These titles have guided our team in designing culturally sensitive, interculturally grounded, and creatively engaging non-formal learning environments — especially for participants from migrant, refugee, and multi-ethnic backgrounds.

 You’ll find this collection not as a required reading list, but as an open invitation to continue learning, reflecting, and reimagining the role of education in shaping a more inclusive Europe.

Trainer’s Literature Review

 This curated selection of books was not chosen at random. Each title reflects a specific question, challenge, or breakthrough moment we’ve encountered while working with culturally and religiously diverse youth in Erasmus+ training spaces — especially those with refugee or migrant backgrounds.

 As facilitators, educators, and human beings navigating complex group dynamics, we believe deeply in balancing **practice** with **critical reflection**. It’s not enough to run a well-paced simulation or deliver a powerful energiser. Without deeper understanding of structural inequality, cultural positioning, inter-epistemic tension, or historical trauma, even our best efforts risk becoming superficial or unintentionally harmful.

 That’s why these books are more than background reading — they are *co-thinkers*. They’ve helped us reconsider what inclusion really looks like, how power flows in a learning space, and how to welcome each participant’s identity without essentialising it. They’ve guided us through dilemmas that don’t have neat answers — and shown us how to sit with discomfort long enough for new insight to emerge.



💡 For us at Phoenix Knowledge Wings, academic literature is not separate from fieldwork. It is a part of the toolkit — just like post-its, flipcharts, or dialogue circles. These authors helped us improve our listening, question our assumptions, and build stronger foundations for intercultural leadership, trust, and group cohesion.

📖 You are warmly encouraged to explore whichever titles speak to you. Whether it's the performative power of drama, the realities of postcolonial critique, or the pedagogical beauty of play — you'll find something that resonates. Not because you "should," but because staying sharp, open, and aware is the most respectful thing we can do for those we train.

This isn't theory vs. practice — it's theory *for* practice. And in the world of non-formal education, that's how change happens.

Selected Books Analysed by Our Team for Erasmus+ Non-Formal Education

Cover



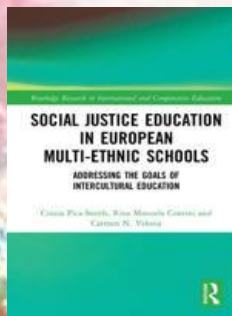
Why to read

Chew Lee Teo (2023). **A Teacher's Playkit for Knowledge Building**. Routledge.

Our facilitators integrated Teo's participatory toolkit to design sessions where young people co-create knowledge instead of passively receiving it. The emphasis on student ideas informed our simulation game frameworks and energiser adaptations across intercultural groups.

Crutchfield, J., & Schewe, M. (Eds.). (2017). **Going Performative in Intercultural Education**. Multilingual Matters.

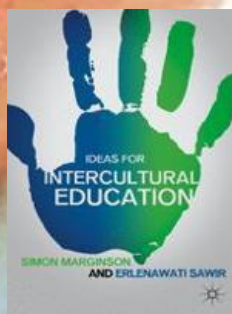
We applied performative strategies to strengthen non-verbal and embodied methods during youth trainings. Our team used theatre-based trust games to transcend language barriers with refugee-background participants.



Pica-Smith, C., Contini, R. M., & Veloria, C. (2018). **Social Justice Education in European Multi-Ethnic Schools.**

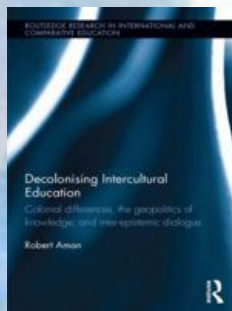
Routledge.

This critical work shaped our intercultural leadership modules by deepening our focus on structural inequalities. It helped us frame intercultural education not just as empathy work, but as civic transformation.



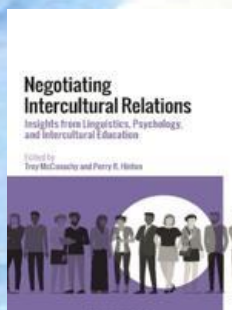
Marginson, S., & Sawir, E. (2012). **Ideas for Intercultural Education.** Palgrave Macmillan.

A foundational influence for our trainers. It helped us rethink cultural exchange as a two-way transformation and inspired activities where participants become co-learners across difference.



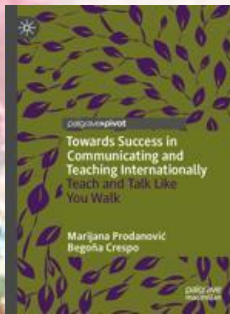
Aman, R. (2018). **Decolonising Intercultural Education.** Routledge.

This work shifted our understanding from interculturalism as polite coexistence to a deeper, more honest encounter with knowledge systems. It has influenced our terminology, readings, and simulation dilemmas.



McConachy, T., & Hinton, P. R. (Eds.). (2023). **Negotiating Intercultural Relations.** Bloomsbury.

Our trainers drew from this volume's insights on language and social positioning to anticipate microaggressions, misreadings, and silence in group dynamics. It shaped our conflict-prevention modules.



Prodanović, M., & Crespo, B. (2024). **Towards Success in Communicating and Teaching Internationally.** Palgrave Macmillan.

This guide helped our multilingual team refine communication strategies in diverse youth groups and avoid pragmatic misunderstandings, especially with English as a second/third language.



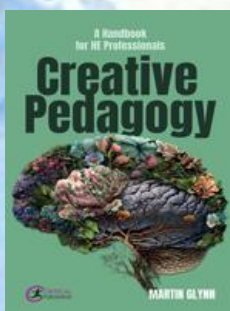
Sternberg, R. J., & Karami, S. (Eds.). (2024). **Transformational Creativity.** Palgrave Macmillan.

We embraced this volume's definition of creativity with purpose. It helped us distinguish between "fun" and truly meaningful innovation in training and project design.



Mardell, B. et al. (2023). **A Pedagogy of Play.** Project Zero, Harvard GSE.

This book validated our playful learning strategies. It reframed energisers and gallery walks as essential tools for expression and cultural exchange, not just entertainment.



Glynn, M. (2023). **Creative Pedagogy.** Critical Publishing.

This handbook guided our team to embed reflection, social justice and inclusive humour into our non-formal practices. It confirmed our belief that creative pedagogy is intercultural pedagogy.