

Europe in Perspective

Transnational Training on
Diversity in Cultural Learning

Training Programme

Getting to know Europe and each other better

Day **1**

8 Not being me 2

Activity

75 min

Useful for:

Exploring alternative identities, the fluidity of identity and the influence of identity on opinions

Resources needed:

Various items of clothing, wigs, hats – in other words a dressing up box. Paper and pens.

Room layout

Chairs distributed in groups (circles)

What Happens?

Participants are divided into groups of five or six. Each group represents a committee of elected city councillors who have been brought together to discuss and resolve a contentious proposal about which the city council has to take a decision. The groups should elect a chair and debate the issue.

Participants should imagine that they themselves have been elected onto the city council, and the views they express are those they would have expressed if sitting on a city council. After about 25 minutes, they vote on whether they agree or disagree with the proposal. They can also come up with an alternative solution. They record the result of their vote.

Each group is allocated one issue to debate:

- Environmental threat caused by private business
There is environmental threat caused by private business – a tank of toxic waste is leaking and threatening to cause an environmental disaster.
Proposed solution: The city council pays for the repairs to the tank of toxic waste by moving money from the museums budget.
- Refugee camp
There is a refugee camp next to our city. It's full beyond capacity.
Proposed solution: Open up houses owned by the municipality for the refugees to live in.
- Local newspaper
The local newspaper, which the city council subsidises, is always criticises the council.
Proposed solution: Cut the funding.
- Brain drain
Well-educated young people are leaving the city.
Proposed solution: Tax relief for new businesses started by young people in the city.

(The facilitator of course also can create his or her own scenarios.)

Then let the participants know that there has been the election and a new city council has been elected. They are again a committee of city council debating a contentious issue, but this time they will play the person they invented in the interview before the activity began. To help them get into character, they can go to the dressing up box to acquire props which help them keep in role. They should also use the notes that the interviewer made as they interviewed them.

Participants re-join their group. They begin by introducing themselves to each other in their new character and interact as if they were meeting for the first time after an election. Then they start to debate the same issue and again take a vote at the end.

Participants then reflect on the experience.

- What was different in the group/when your character changed?
- Were their feelings, behaviour and opinions significantly different in the second round?
- How were their opinions shaped by the identity of their characters?

Notes for facilitators:

Be prepared that some participants will feel very uncomfortable with role play and find it difficult to engage with the activity. Be prepared to work with them and support them. In the reflection try to help participants see the way in which opinions are nearly always shaped by identity. There is often no point trying to

argue against opinions unless you simultaneously work on changes of identity. To change one's mind often means changing who you are – and that is very hard to do and very threatening.

»Performance excellence and acting skills are not required and should not be the focus of this part of the activity. What is required is for one to put themselves in someone else's shoes, to make decisions (and justify them) from a place which can be very different from their own. It is important to make this clear to the participants.«

Jenny Karaviti, TENet-Gr, Greece



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