EDUCATION AS A WAY TO INCLUSION, THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AS AN EDUCATIONAL METHOD

REPORT

Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)

In cooperation with the
Directorate of Youth and Sports
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, France
20th – 27th July 2008

Directorate of Youth and Sport
Direction de la jeunesse et du sport

This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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1. Executive summary

Bringing together the school students of Europe, OBESSU (Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions) is not only striving for school student representation but also to improve the quality and accessibility of education in Europe. Social inclusion and access to education have for a long time been among the cornerstones in the work of OBESSU and over the past years we have been working with the inclusion of different minorities. However, while addressing for example gender equality and the inclusion of sexual minorities, the inclusion of cultural and ethnic minorities in school remained a challenge. Over the years the challenge grew bigger and OBESSU identified a strong need among its member organisations to start working with this field. In parallel to this, more and more of the European countries are facing severe problems with increasing racism and nationalism as well as challenges in relation to the inclusion of different minorities, in particular in the educational system. OBESSU believes that school and the school student unions can play a great part in overcoming these challenges and this study session marks the beginning of a greater commitment from the side of OBESSU. The study session was the start of a process of collecting expertise and experiences of our members, developing our own policies and giving our members the tools they need in order to improve their work on this particular topic.

The aim of our study session was to raise the participants' awareness on the contribution of intercultural learning to inclusive school policies as well as provide them with the tools they need to implement intercultural learning in their own school environment. As the majority of the membership was rather inexperienced in this particular field, we chose to start from the very beginning and explore the different concepts, mainly culture, identity, inclusion and intercultural learning. As a part of this, we saw the participants' reflection on their own identities and cultural belonging as crucial. Also the sharing of experiences and realities in relation to the inclusion of cultural minorities in their schools was important for the group to reach a common understanding. As many of the participants also had personal experiences related to the topic, the preparatory team wanted to make sure they got enough space and time for reflection.

Having reached a common understanding and basis for the work, the focus was set on the development of the participants' competencies in the field of intercultural learning. The aim was to equip them with a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and attitudes and in that way make sure that they would be able to return to their local realities and get started with the work there. Another central element was the creation of guidelines for the development and implementation of intercultural practice in schools across Europe. We believed this would be a strong tool for our members to use partly in their political and advocacy work and partly in schools and with school students. At the same time the guidelines would give OBESSU an invaluable basis for our work in the field. The guidelines were to be completed with both personal and organisational action-plans for the participants, which would guarantee the follow-up of the event.

OBESSU was very satisfied with the final outcomes of the study session. One could say that both the participants and the preparatory team underwent a learning process, where both personal and organisational views and stands where challenged and broadened. Many of the participants underlined how much they had learned and how the study session had helped them see things in both their organisations and societies that they had not noticed before. Both the participants and the preparatory team felt empowered and eager to get started with the follow-up, although everybody knew that this was only the beginning of a challenging and demanding process.

2. Team details

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3. Aims and objectives of the study session

Aim of the study session

Raising participants' awareness on the contribution of Intercultural Learning to inclusive school policies and provide them with tools to implement Intercultural Learning in their own school environment.

Key Objectives

Understanding

- Explore the concepts of Culture and Identity, Intercultural Learning and Inclusion;
- Encourage participants to reflect on their own identity and cultural belonging as well as stereotypes and prejudice;
- Sharing experiences and realities in relation to the inclusion of cultural minorities in the participants' schools and organisations;

Developing

- Develop participants' competencies in the field of Intercultural Learning, with a particular focus on the school environment;
- Create guidelines for the development and the implementation of intercultural practice in schools across Europe;

Implementing

- Develop concrete, personal and organisational action-plans as a follow-up of the session;

4. Report from the first preparatory meeting

Day 1 – 6th June 2008

The preparatory meeting started with a short presentation of all the members of the team, as the team didn't know each other from before. Before proceeding with presentations of OBESSU and the Council of Europe, the team agreed on an agenda and working hours for the meeting.

After the presentations of OBESSU and the Council of Europe , the tasks and roles of the Educational Advisor and the Course Director were discussed and defined. Also the role of the team members was discussed.

Then it was time to start with the aims and the objectives of the study session. The Educational Advisor gave a background to the concept of study sessions, and also clarified the general aims of them. The Course Director explained why OBESSU had applied for a study session with this particular topic and how this event fitted OBESSU's political priorities and activities. Afterwards, a brainstorm was done in order to think about the aim and objectives of the study session. Although the application that OBESSU had submitted months before worked as the basis for the discussions, the team felt it was important to revise it and agree on a common aim and together work with the objectives.

The brainstorming was fruitful and brought up topics such as *identity, inclusion, integration, assimilation, religion, limits for understanding, something concrete to bring home, the link between religion, culture and tradition, diversity, a clear school approach, exploring the concept of culture* and many more. The team tried to narrow down the different concepts and find a clear focus of the event. It was also clear from the beginning that many of the participants of the study session would have little or no previous experience with the above mentioned topics, which of course needs to be taken into account when planning the focus of the event. However the team agreed on the following aim: "*raising participants' awareness on the contribution of Intercultural Learning to inclusive school policies and provide them with tools to implement Intercultural Learning in their own school environment*".

Having agreed on the overall aim of the study session, the team had a clear picture of where to head and the objectives followed quite naturally as well as the flow of the programme. The programme consisted of three main blocks; exploring, developing and implementing, with which the team wanted to give the participants the opportunity to explore the key concepts and

develop their competences in the field of intercultural learning as well as create guidelines and action-plans for future work.

Day 2 – 7ᵗʰ June 2008

The second meeting day was devoted to the programme of the study session. The team discussed the flow of the programme and agreed on an approximate focus of all the sessions. The in-depth planning of the sessions would be done by the team members and all sessions had a main responsible as well as a support team member. As a way of supporting the process, the team agreed to use 'session outlines', where aims and objectives of each session were defined, as well as program, methodology and materials needed. Having defined the programme, a discussion on the expected outcomes of the event took place. The team was eager to make sure that the participants had something to bring home with them and as one of the objectives was to create guidelines, the process of creating them was thoroughly discussed.

Before continuing with the actual division of tasks, the team discussed preferences regarding tasks and responsibilities. Besides the task division, the team also agreed on a timetable with set deadlines for session outlines and feedback on them.

The last thing on the agenda of the first preparatory meeting was practical issues, such as administrative arrangements and reimbursements. Having done that the team moved on to an evaluation that on the whole was very positive. The team members seemed to have confidence in each other and in the session, although high expectations and the tight timetable were worrying many of the team members.

5. Day-by-day report of the study session

Day 0 – 20ᵗʰ July

The 20ᵗʰ July was the day of arrival and the first time most of the participants met each other, and the group met as such. The first evening is always important for creating a good social climate, where everybody feels comfortable with each other. After dinner the preparatory team gathered all the participants in the meeting room. The team presented itself and shortly introduced the programme of the night. Different games were used to get to know all the names, countries and the organisations of the people in the group.

After this session, the participants were invited to stay and enjoy some drinks and snacks. In that way the group building continued in an even more informal way, giving the participants the chance to get to know each other more personally.

Day 1 – 21ˢᵗ July

Morning session

The first working day started with an official opening of the study session by the preparatory team. The team members presented themselves and their backgrounds in the school student movement, followed by a presentation of OBESSU, its aims and its structure. Council of Europe Educational Adviser Alexandra Raykova then welcomed the participants on behalf of the Council of Europe, and continued with a short presentation of the Council of Europe, its key bodies, and its activities. Then it was time to start focusing on the study session and a general introduction to the aims, the objectives and the methodology followed. This presentation aimed to create a common understanding of the expected outcomes within the group. The preparatory team then continued with presenting the programme and the flow of the week and finished with a thorough explanation of the programme of the day.

The coffee break was followed by short icebreakers. The next session was focused on the participants' hopes, fears and expectations. Partly the team found this reflection important for the learning process of the participants, and partly it helped the team to follow the processes of the participants and adapt

the programme to their expectations of the week. The participants were given pieces of paper clothes in different colours, where they wrote down their hopes, fears and expectations concerning the study session. They were then hung up on a wall inside the plenary, so that everybody could read what the others were thinking and in that way also helping to make sure that the fears would not come true and that hopes and expectations were fulfilled.

Finally, the group agreed on the following "Code of Conduct" for the Study Session, in order to keep the debates fluid and ensure everyone could speak his/her mind without being interrupted:

- We speak one at a time

- We speak in English only

- We make sure we are on time

- We ask questions to the team when necessary

- We respect others' opinions and ideas

- We are actively listening

- No computers, no cell phones

- We use each others' names or at least ask for it

- We remain open and curious

- We ask for the floor before speaking

- We Keep It Simple & Short (KISS)

Afternoon session

Knowing the delicacy to the topic of the study session, the team had chosen to continue the group-building activities after lunch. The team had picked an exercise from the Compass, "The Magic Carpet", which involves team building and trust. The group had to stand on a blanket, some of them having "disabilities" (blind, mute, hands/feet tied etc.). The objective of the exercise is to flip the blanket on the other side without anyone from the group stepping out of the "Magic Carpet". The exercise underlines that people with different needs can be of help in solving issues and stresses the need of working together. Also the physical contact that the game demands is important for the group building and it was followed by a debriefing where the participants could share their thoughts and the different roles that people took/got were analysed and discussed.

After a short coffee break, the session continued with an exercise where the participants were divided into smaller groups. The objective of the session was for participants to share the realities they live in their respective countries/regions. Mostly, the focus had to be drawn onto the situation of cultural and ethnic minorities in the territories concerned. The participants gathered in country-specific groups to reflect on the situation in their own country and what minorities they had in their school system. Each country then made a short presentation of their situation, underlining what minorities are represented and how the educational systems deal with diversity and the potential challenges it brings.

The fact that the participants came from very different backgrounds was challenging, and made it even more important to give the participants a good introduction and deep understanding of the matters the study session was dealing with. Especially some of the participants from countries with little minority inclusion were quite inexperienced in the field of intercultural issues. Therefore this session focused on exploring what minorities exist in different parts of Europe and how they are treated.

Before dinner, the evaluation groups were introduced, and all the participants were divided into groups with their responsible team member. Every preparatory team member had a group of participants, with whom they met for about half an hour every day before dinner. The groups discussed the programme of the day, and how the participants were doing in general. This gave the participants an opportunity to give the team immediate feedback, but also a second chance to debrief the happenings of the day in smaller groups than the plenary.

Evening session

The evening saw a traditional inter-cultural evening, where all the participants presented their countries. They had been asked to bring something that is specific for their country, such as food, drinks and/or music, in order to present their country in an entertaining way. It was much appreciated by the participants.

Day 2 –22nd July

Morning session

The morning of the second day started with a debate. The participants were confronted with provocative statements and invited to take a stand in support or against said statements. Once the first choice was made, both sides

had to convince participants of the other side that they were right. At the same time the participants could change their places as the discussions went on. The debate was a way of encouraging the participants to let their thoughts run and challenge their opinions as well as broaden their views on concepts such as culture, majority-minority, religion-tradition and inclusion. Furthermore, the debate reminded everybody of the different realities surrounding minorities in Europe. The discussions were moderated by the prep-team, and turned out to be very constructive. The main points of the debates are reproduced here below:

Statement 1: Religious symbols should not be allowed in schools

While most of the participants rapidly agreed that school, as an institution, should not force faith onto their students and therefore should not display religious symbols within its facilities (i.e. crucifix on walls etc.), the main debate was fuelled by the issue of personal religious symbols. A relative majority stressed the importance of personal freedom and free expression of one's faith as the reason for allowing personal religious symbols at school (i.e. crucifix, Islamic veil, kippa etc.). On the other side, participants stressed the risk of proselytise, and the fact that some religious symbols are expressions of the submission of women to patriarchal traditions. Religion as one of the main causes for different conflicts was also mentioned and a participant from Bosnia & Herzegovina wondered if religious symbols were worth the risk of conflicts. To his mind, it was better to keep a peaceful school without religious symbols, than a school with free expression of faith, which would form the basis for different conflicts. At the end of the debate, the repartition of participants was practically a tie.

Statement 2: Ethnic minorities drop-out of school because of their cultural traditions.

The statement created a strong majority against itself. Almost all of the participants focused on the responsibility of the school system in adapting the teaching to the student. It was clearly stated that different cultures within a school strongly enrich the education, if properly taken into consideration.

Statement 3: Immigrants should adapt to their host society and not the other way around

At the beginning, the repartition was mostly in favour of supporting the statement. After the explanation of both camps, it appeared that the participants agreed on being against the statement as it was formulated. To their view, immigrants should adapt to the host society, but not abandon everything. Moreover, not only should the immigrants adapt, but the society also had to make some adaptation steps towards the minorities it hosts.

Statement 4: A minority youth representative can never represent all young people.

A strong majority of the participants were against this statement, arguing that people were all the same. However, the higher difficulty of young people from minorities to get elected as representatives was stressed. Moreover, it was shown that in some cases, people from the majority were also elected as the representatives of minorities.

Statement 5: It is easier to be gay than to be black

The repartition was more or less equivalent in this debate. However, it was stressed that while both minorities are discriminated against, the homosexual community has some extra discriminations in some countries. In fact, some countries, even in Europe, still have legislations limiting the rights of homosexuals, which remained a crime until very recently in most European countries. However, it was agreed upon that it is practically impossible to create hierarchy between discriminated minorities. In today's society, being gay or being black is approximately equally difficult.

The debate was followed by a debriefing, where the participants got the chance to discuss the statements, their reactions and how they felt during the debate.

The second part of the morning session consisted of so called research groups. The aim of the session was to explore some of the key concepts related to intercultural learning. As the terminology often is very theoretical and difficult to define, the idea was to use a wikipedia-like concept. The participants were divided into 5 groups and had the task to define a theoretical concept and write it down on a flipchart. These flipcharts would be completed during the week. In addition, the groups were asked to present their definition in an artistic way. Group 1 had to present the concept of 'minority' through a song. Group 2 described 'culture' by means of a pantomime. Group 3 had the

task to paint the concept of 'diversity' (picture). The central concept of 'inclusion' was illustrated by group 4 through the following poem:

There is a solution
To the inclusion
It may create confusion
And need a revolution,
But there is a solution
To the inclusion

Inclusion is not an illusion
If you want to integrate
You have to participate
There is a solution
The solution is inclusion

The conclusion;
Inclusion must be a part of evolution
This is no illusion
One solution: inclusion

Finally, group 5 described the ideal 'intercultural society' with a Ballet Dance show.

Afternoon session

The first exercise of the afternoon was called "Draw your flower", and was aiming partly at self-knowledge and partly at getting to know each other. The group was asked to draw flowers where all petals represented an aspect of their lives. The different petals could have different sizes as well according to the part it played in their lives. The flowers were then put on the wall of the plenary room. Many of the participants found it interesting to see what kind of things people had chosen to have on their flower and it resulted in many discussions. The drawing was the last step of developing openness in the group and a climate where everybody could work together.

After a short coffee break, the participants had the pleasure to welcome Pr Pradeep Chakkarath, Professor in Psychology at the University of Bochum, Germany. Pr Chakkarath was invited to the study session to give some

theoretical input on the concepts of culture and identity as well as the link between culture, tradition and religion.

Culture

A culture is **a way of life** of a group of people, the **beliefs, attitudes, values, myths, history, goals, worldviews, artefacts, customs, rituals, symbols, behaviours**, that they **adhere to,** generally **without thinking** about them, that they accept and that are **passed along** by **communication** and **imitation** from one generation to the next. To summarize: *"Culture is the man-made part of the human environment"*. (Melville J. *Herskovits*, 1948)

Identity

In the social sciences „identity" means **personal identity,** the essence of a self-conscious person. Being an "essence", identity persists over time and despite of changes. Modifications will happen, however they will be experienced by the person as **his** or **her** development. When social scientists talk about „personal identity" they often mean, personality, self or selfhood or individuality. All these concepts refer to a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that **uniquely** influences his or her cognitions, feelings, motivations, and behaviours in various situations. *"Identity is the narrative, the stories which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they came from"* (Stuart Hall).

The four basic personality types

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is the feeling of belonging to a group. Cultural identity is **part of one's personal identity** and may also pertain to place, time, gender, history, nationality, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, race, ethnicity, language, etc.

"Identity is not only a story, a narrative which we tell ourselves about ourselves, it is stories which change with historical circumstances. And identity shifts with the way in which we think and hear them and experience them. Far from only coming from the still small point of truth inside us, identities actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come

to step into the place of the recognitions which others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition." (Stuart Hall)

Pr Chakkarath then went on with tests of self perception of the participants. For the first exercise, participants were asked to write 6 statements about themselves (I AM .....). The results mostly separated the group between *in*dependent and *inter*dependent self-concepts.

A person with an *independent self-concept*

- feels separate from the social context

- has a unitary and stable structure

- has an internal orientation and focuses on personal aspects (abilities, thoughts, feelings)

- wants to be unique, express him/herself, and promote his/her own goals

A person with an *interdependent self- concept*

- feels connected with the social context

- has a flexible and variable structure

- has an external orientation and focuses on social aspects (status, role, relationships)

- wants to belong, fit in, promote others' goals

Finally, Pr Chakkarath approached the notion of worldviews and its relations with the concept of personal identity. A worldview is a cognitive framework that our culture provides in order to help us understand and interpret the world and our role in that world. He organised a descriptive exercise to show the different cognitive frameworks at hand. After being shown an animation, participants were asked to describe it as best they could. The descriptions showed two main types of cognitive approaches to the world (aka worldviews).

On the one hand, people with an **Analytic Cognitive Styles**:

- Count ("One fish is swimming behind four other fish," etc.).

- Specify a lot of details ("Yellow-blue-black-green-red fish," "green seaweed on the bottom"; "air bubbles are moving upwards," etc.).

- Give descriptions involving separation ("One fish is faster"; "... is leading the others"; "... is being ostracized," etc.)

- Focus on the individual fish

On the other hand, people with **Holistic Cognitive Styles**:

- Don't count as much (e.g., "One fish is swimming behind a group of fish.").

- Instead of details, tell stories ("The group has lost a tired fish and is letting it catch up.")

- Give descriptions involving harmony ("The group is accepting the fish again.").

- Focus on the group

The fact that tests usually show that the Analytic approach is more frequent in the Western World, while the Holistic one is preferred in eastern Asia, led the speaker to express a brief definition of cultural determinism. **The theory of CULTURAL DETERMINISM** holds that the ideas, meanings, beliefs, interpretations, judgments, values, etc. people learn as members of society **determines** human nature. **People are what they learn.**

The optimistic version of the theory places no limits on the abilities of human beings to do or to be whatever they want. Some anthropologists suggest that there is no universal "right way" of being human. "Right way" is almost always "our way" and "our way" in one society almost never corresponds to "our way" in any other society. Proper attitude of an informed human being could only be that of tolerance

The pessimistic version maintains that people are what they are conditioned to be without having any control. Human beings are passive creatures and do whatever their culture tells them to do. This explanation locates the causes of human behaviour mainly in the human brain.

A final test helped the participants to link the theoretical approach of the session with the topic of discrimination. The exercise is described here below:

Imagine the following scenario:

A group of skinheads is running an „Aryan Centre". Anyone who is interested in the centre's activities is welcome… with a few exceptions:

- no Jews

- no Muslims

- no coloured people

- no women

- no gays

Reasons given: The group's worldview which is said to reflect some of the basic elements of the broader Fascist worldview.

Now imagine the following scenario:

A group of Jews is running a „Centre for Jewish studies". Anyone who is interested in the centre's activities is welcome... with a few exceptions:

- no Muslims

- no Arabs

- no Germans

- no women

- no gays

Reasons given: The group's worldview which is said to reflect some of the basic elements of the broader Jewish worldview.

Both examples challenge one's willingness to be tolerant.

Most of the participants admitted they would have different attitudes towards the second scenario when compared to the first scenario.

Pr Chakkarath left the debate open through these last interrogations: Why and how is the way we think about the question of tolerance related to our culture(s) and the attitude towards ourselves?

In general, the participants were fascinated by Pr Chakkarath presentation and several participants approached Pr Chakkarath afterwards to ask for further explanations or get practical examples of the theories he developed.

Day 3 – 23rd July

Morning session

As the preparatory team wanted to broaden the views on discrimination and inequalities in society as well as from where these originate, the morning started with an activity called "*Take a step forward*" taken from the manual *COMPASS*. All participants were given a role that was briefly described, and given the task of building up a picture of themselves and the lives they were living. Having done that, the participants were asked to line up beside each

other and the facilitator was reading out a list of situations or events, asking all the people that said yes to the statement to take one step forward. The statements described different life situations and choices and hence represented the different opportunities people have in life. The difference between the positions of the different characters was clear already after a few of the statements and in the end of the activity you had people in the very front as well as in the very back.

The activity was followed by a thorough debriefing, where the participants were asked to share feelings and thoughts on not only the activity but also the bigger picture and links to the realities in their home countries. A majority of the participants was very positive about the activity; stepping into the shoes of someone else gave them a powerful experience of the inequalities in society and the fact that they all could draw parallels to their own lives and societies made it even more emotional for them. Many participants also said that the way the characters were randomly distributed in many ways symbolised the actual unequal and unfair distribution of opportunities. People that ended up in the very back said that they already after a few statements started to feel that their situation was hopeless and that there was not even any use of trying, while people in the very front underlined how scary it was to see how easy it was to just continue moving forward and by doing that not even realising how far behind others were. The debriefing ended with a long discussion on possible measures to take in order to change these structures, mainly within the field of education in particular.

After a coffee break in the sun, the participants gathered in plenary for the next session. At that stage of the programme the participants had been given the opportunity to explore the different key concepts related to intercultural learning and inclusive schools. But, in order to find a common understanding and make sure that everybody felt comfortable with these concepts, the participants were divided into small 'research groups'. All the groups were attributed a concept and a few questions related to it and were asked to agree on a definition or explanation. Since all of these concepts are full of nuances and difficult to precisely define, the participants were told that their explanations would work as sort of Wiki, where all the participants could add new aspects and perspectives afterwards. The groups were invited to use all sorts of resources and the preparatory team was also available for support and questions. The session ended with all the groups presenting the work they had done and giving the other groups an opportunity to comment, disagree and ask questions.

Afternoon session

Michael Guet, Head of the Roma and Travellers Division, DG3 Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe, visited the study session in the afternoon. The session was meant to build on the work that the participants had done in the research groups before lunch and Michael was asked to give the participants an introduction to the concepts of and the mechanisms behind social exclusion and inclusion as well as discrimination. He used a lot of examples from his work and experiences in the Council of Europe and based his input on different definitions and documents, which gave it quite an institutional touch. However, he managed to illustrate the differences between countries and how differently governments interpret the reasons for certain minorities not succeeding in school. He also highlighted the fact that different countries have very different understandings of to what extent different minority groups have to adapt to the surrounding society. Although the definitions were helpful for the participants, many of them said that the methodology was a bit too formal for this group and that the vocabulary was different and quite difficult to understand.

In order to bring back the focus to the school and the reality of the participants, the rest of the afternoon was devoted to the different educational systems in Europe. The participants were divided into smaller groups, according to their country or region of origin. These small groups were asked to start by mapping the situation; what kind of diversity is there in their school system and which are the different minority groups? This was followed by discussing the different challenges that they have identified in relation to the inclusion of cultural minorities as well as measures already taken. All the countries were presented in the end of the session and the participants mentioned a broad range of minorities, amongst others national, ethnic, religious, cultural and sexual minorities. Many countries mentioned the Roma minority and underlined that special attention has to be put on the education of Roma children. Inadequate curricula, drop-outs and a weak transition to employment, financial challenges as well racism, nationalism and a weak understanding for minorities were mentioned among the problems. In general it was easier for the groups to point out problems and challenges than good practice, which was due to the limited measures taken so far. When it came to dreams and visions, it was easy for all the groups to list measures that they would like to take. A few examples would be peer support systems, language classes, reforms of the religious education and campaigns to raise awareness of different minorities. These groups worked as a good basis for the rest of the

week's programme and especially the more solution-oriented approach that was about to come.

Evening session

The preparatory team had organised a movie night that all participants were invited to in the evening. The team had chosen the film '*Bend it like Beckham*', as it addresses and explores themes like race, ethnicity and gender in contemporary London. The film has been very popular and was much appreciated also by the participants. It also both supported and built on the topics that were dealt with during the week and gave the participants many things to reflect on and discuss with each other.

Day 4 – 24th July

Morning session

The participants were gathered in the city centre, in the neighbourhood of the Council of Europe where a session on stereotypes was held. The aim was not only to define and explore this concept, but also to analyse how intercultural learning can be put into practice by participants in their realities. The session started with the "Euro-rail À La Carte" exercise from the Education Pack, where the participants were asked to pick three people with whom they would like to share a train compartment from a list of 17 people. All of the 17 people were described with one line, and most of them belonged to a more or less discriminated group. The participants were then asked to move into groups where they had to agree on the three most popular and the three least popular fellow passengers. The groups then presented their views and tried to explain why they had chosen as they did. The exercise was followed by a thorough debriefing, where many of the participants said it was difficult to realise that they had prejudices themselves as well towards other minorities.

In the second half of the morning, the participants were gathered in the main building of the Council of Europe for a session on intercultural learning, entitled « How to develop competences to live with the "others"? ». The session started with a brief definition of 3 main means of learning:

- Cognitive learning:

- Emotional Learning:

- Behavioural Learning:

This was followed by the "Nine dots" exercise, in which participants were asked to link together 9 dots (3 rows of 3 dots, see diagram & solution) in only 4 lines and without leaving their pen. The aim of the exercise is to show participants the importance of being able to: "think Out of the box"
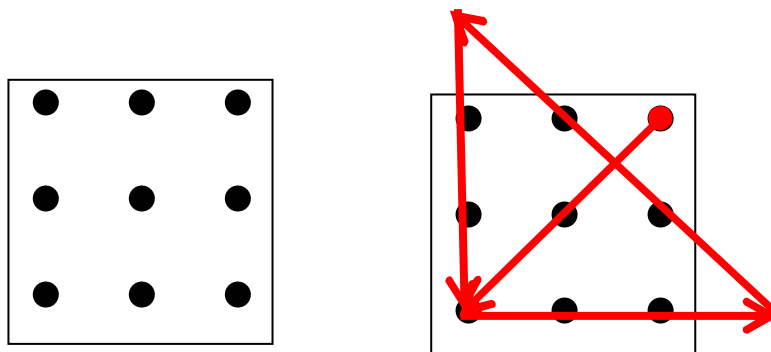
In the same way, intercultural learning is about being able to think out of the social and cultural « boxes » we have been raised in. The objective of intercultural learning is to help the student/learner to go beyond his/her own mental borders in order to discover how rich his/her own culture is. It is a fundamental tool to foster respect and promote dignity amongst different cultures from the earliest stages of life.

Once again the concept of culture worked as a stepping stone, here presented through the metaphor of the iceberg, which enabled participants to get a deeper understanding of intercultural learning:

The tip of the Iceberg (visible part of Culture) includes the conscious aspects of the Cultural Identity:

- o Traditions
- o Religion
- o Language
- o Arts
- o Music
- o Literature
- o Cooking

The immerged part of the Iceberg (invisible part) consists of all the unconscious aspects of the Culture:

- o Values
- o Perceptions

- o Behaviour

- o Relationships

- o Gender roles

- o Body language

- o Time perception

- o Space perception

- o Decision- making strategies

- o Work

Intercultural Learning is acquiring knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes connected with living in an intercultural context.

An intercultural field of action is defined as the zone, be it geographic, social or historical where two ore more culture make contact, collide and/or blend

Subculture? New culture?

Culture 1

Field of action 1

Culture 2:

Field of action 2

Intercultural field of action
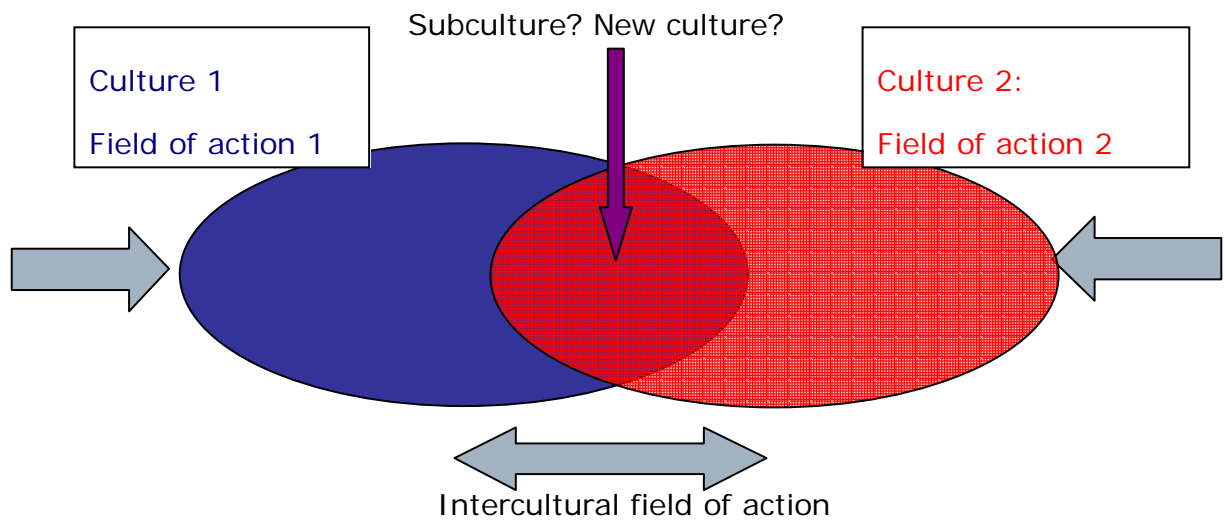
together.

According to the frequency, scale and general interactions within the intercultural fields of action, intercultural sensitivity can undergo several sensible evolutions and mutations. The following model of development of intercultural sensitivity was presented to the participants, based on R.M. Paige's "Education For The Intercultural Experience" (1993):

Ethnocentrist Stages   **Ethnorelative Stages**

6. Integration

5. Adaptation

4. Acceptance

Contextual
evaluation

3. Minimization

Empathy,
pluralism

2. Defense

Respect for
difference

Universalism

1. Denial

Denigration,
superiority

Isolation,
separation
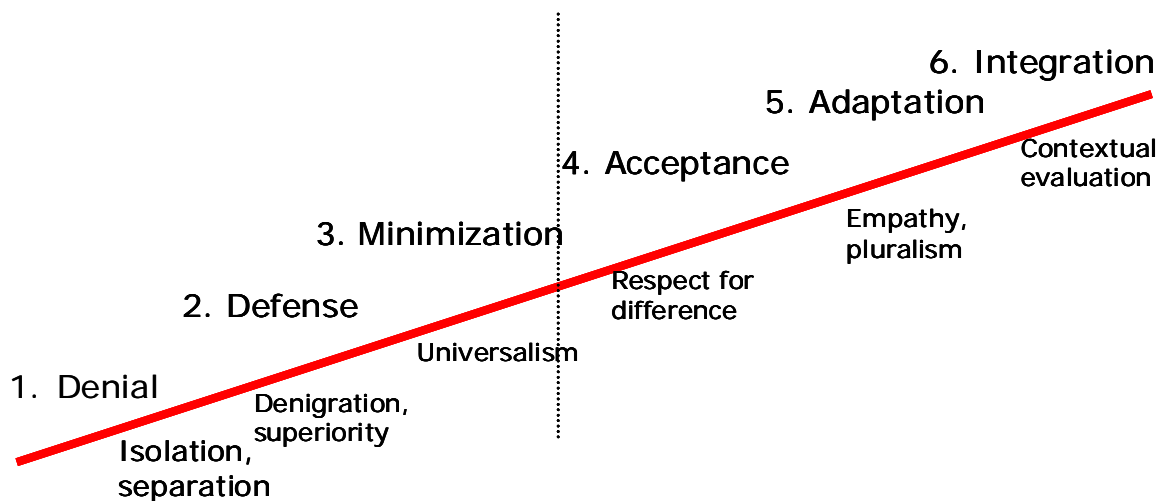
Afternoon session

The theoretical background and input resulted in many questions from the participants, especially regarding the implementation of the different theories and models.

The rest of the afternoon was free, so a majority of the participants went to see some of Strasbourg while the team met for preparing further sessions.

Evening session

After a free afternoon in a sunny Strasbourg, the whole group met for dinner in the city-centre. The participants got the chance to enjoy some typical food from the region and afterwards those who wanted were invited to join an evening out. This included a light show that the City of Strasbourg had organised to celebrate the European cooperation. The different member states of the EU were presented in the show, which resulted in long discussions on stereotypes and prejudices in Europe.

Day 5 – 25th July

Morning session

Having explored the key concepts of intercultural learning and started the process of anchoring them to a school reality, it was time to look closer at what can be done in schools. As one of the expected outcomes of the study session was a set of guidelines for the development and implementation of intercultural practices in schools, the preparatory team had planned workshops for the whole day. All the workshops were addressing a particular school-

related topic, relevant to intercultural learning and inclusive schools. Partly the preparatory team wanted to give the participants the chance to improve their skills in a particular field, and partly have a more action-oriented approach and get started with the drafting of the guidelines. Hence, the main objectives of the workshops were to identify the areas, in which we want intercultural practices to be implemented, as well as short- and long-term goals within every area. Moreover, the groups were asked to formulate practical and realistic guidelines for more inclusive schools.

As the expectations were high, the whole day was devoted to workshops. The participants could choose between three different workshops in the morning; Curricula, Pedagogical Methods and Social Climate.

In the afternoon three new workshops were organised and this time the participants could chose to work with Facilities & Structures, Participation or Inclusive Organisations.

Right before dinner the groups were asked to present the work they had done during the day (see next page for a summary). All the groups had managed to draft guidelines and seemed very impressed by the work done, which contributed to a positive atmosphere and also gave the groups that had not finished their work yet some motivation to continue. The participants were also invited to form new groups in the evening, in order to make sure that important aspects were not forgotten.

Although the day was long and the programme demanding, the participants were happy to get started with the more concrete work, where they really felt they could use their own expertise and experience. All the working areas were seen as relevant and important to address and many of the participants also highlighted how much they had learned during the day. Especially the workshop on Inclusive Organisations was appreciated, as it brought the focus back to the school student councils and unions, reminding them of the importance of working with these issues also internally and giving them some concrete ideas on where to start when getting back home.

Many of the groups continued working after dinner, trying to agree on a final proposal for guidelines.

Day 6 – 26th July

Morning session

The last day of the study session was devoted to follow-up and evaluation. The morning started with a presentation of the final proposal of guidelines of all the working groups, including the changes that were made the night before.

GROUP 1: Curricula

- The curricula have to be created through a democratic process, involving as many different groups as possible. Stakeholders such as teachers and school students have to be recognized as the experts they are. In relevant disciplines (humanities, languages) the most prominent minorities in the territory shall be represented in the curricula-making committee.
- The intercultural perspective and the concept of intercultural learning have to be mainstreamed in the curricula. A committee will be elected to monitor and follow-up the implementation of the curricula. Representatives of all stakeholders in the field of education as well as representatives of different minorities have to be included in the committee.
- The curricula have to have a holistic approach to education, focusing not only on the transmission of knowledge but on developing also the skills and attitudes of the school students' competences.
- The national curricula have to leave space for the schools to include things that are specific for their local community as well as based on the expertise and the interests of the school students.
- The mainstreaming of the intercultural perspective in all subjects is necessary, as we strive for an increased understanding and mutual respect between different groups.
- It is of utmost importance that not only the majority religion of the country is presented but all world religions and the ones practiced in the local community.
- The history education has to go beyond the national history, striving for objectivity and include as many different perspectives as possible.
- Efforts need to be made in order to not focus only on European history and culture, but recognize the whole world.
- School students should be encouraged to learn languages and the language education should include also information about the cultures where the language is spoken. All school students having another mother tongue than the official language of the country of residence have to be entitled to language lessons in their mother tongue.
- As attitudes and values are an integral part of intercultural learning and the curricula focuses mostly on the transmission of knowledge, specific measures need to be taken in order to guarantee the intercultural perspective in the education. Critical thinking and the ability to form an opinion is one of the cornerstones of education.

Also the emotional competences of the school students need to be developed.

- Global education offers a broad range of methodology when addressing issues linked to culture and intercultural dialogue but also human rights, citizenship and diversity. It is important to address also stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, as they often form an obstacle for the intercultural learning.

GROUP 2: Pedagogical Methods

- There are as many ways of learning as there are students in a class, and every student has a unique background. This has to be reflected in the choice of pedagogical method.
- The pedagogical methods should emphasise the importance of critical thinking and challenge the students to form their own opinions and express these.
- The school curriculum, lesson plans and materials should be developed together by both teachers and students, and revised regularly. The needs of the school students should be the focus when developing the pedagogical methods.
- The students-evaluation of the pedagogical methods should be regular and qualitative in order for the teacher to apply the appropriate pedagogical methods.
- It's important to break the old fashioned classroom structure, and prevent teaching from being one-way communication. Teaching methods should be varied and mix formal and non-formal education.
- A schoolbook is not a pedagogical method in itself but rather a tool. All teaching and learning materials have to assist the educative process and reflect the diversity of the surrounding society.
- Peer education provides new and diverse perspectives, and is therefore a tool for reaching an intercultural understanding. All students are experts and they should be encouraged to share their expertise with others.
- Evaluation is a key element in intercultural learning, and should be mandatory. In order for students to progress and develop their competences, a continuous and constructive evaluation of the school students' performances is necessary.
- In order to ensure that the evaluation is regular and personal, teacher- student interaction should be encouraged.
- Various methods should be used when assessing the students: fieldwork and practical exercises should complete the more classical approach of knowledge evaluation.
- All teachers should receive continuous training in intercultural understanding and ways of implementing it. An intercultural approach is a prerequisite for understanding and benefiting from the diversity of the school students as well as a way of preventing conflicts.
- The groups have to be small enough for teachers to be able to see each student as an individual learner.

- Local and youth NGO's should be associated in the education process, especially in non-formal education sessions.
- In order to support school students with special educational needs, different supportive measures should be taken. This would include extra-tutorial lessons, peer support and help with homework. A group to focus on in this context is school students not taught in their mother tongue.

GROUP 3: Social Climate

- The Learning Environment should have a strong focus on the relations between the actors of the school community.
  Top-down teaching methods can contribute to misunderstanding and worsen the general social climate in the classroom and in the school.
- The physical environment and class topography play a great part in the social climate. For instance, classrooms organised in rows hinder socialisation between the students. Classrooms should be organised in such way that socialisation between the students and with the teachers is made possible. Moreover, common areas of school buildings should be available to all school students to foster social interactions outside of the classroom.
- Bullying is one of the main factors damaging the social climate within the schools and minorities are an easy target for bullies. Comprehensive anti-bullying policies should be enforced to address the dire issue of peer pressure and mobbing at school. Students victims of bullying should be enabled to express their fears and social problems with support of a psychologist if/when they require it. To prevent the Bully phenomenon, the transmission of the values of cultural diversity and mutual respect should be one of the main social missions of the educational system starting from elementary schools.
- Feeling part of the school community is the first step towards a better social climate. A democratic school can only be based on dialogue between the stakeholders and therefore, meetings between students, parents and teachers have to be organised on a regular basis.

GROUP 4: Facilities & Structures

- Free access to education has to be guaranteed and the school has to have preparedness to welcome all school students, regardless of background. Free access to education is not only an education free from tuition fees, but includes free learning materials, access to libraries and cultural institutions as well as subsidised trips to and from school and possible housing benefits.
- Educational institutions have to be free from any sort of religious or political (e.g. possibility of private changing rooms at P.E. for all genders, no religious symbols in classrooms)
- The school holidays must not only be based on the holidays of the majority religion.

- School should provide the school students with lunch for free. The school canteen and cafeteria have to make sure that the different needs of the school students are taking into account.
- School libraries have to have the diversity of the school students in mind when selecting books and other materials. All school students should have equal access to different political, religious and cultural sources in different languages.
- School trips must be for free and funded by the government. The content and destination of school trips have to respect the diversity of the classroom as well as reflect the diversity of the surrounding society.

GROUP 5: Participation

- Activities aiming at bringing all school students together should be organised. A safe social environment where these activities can take place has to be clearly ensured.
- Such activities shall contribute to create the feeling of ownership to the school as an institution. It is of great importance to involve all young people in activities which are related to maintaining the schools. Together with rights, being part of the school community confers responsibilities.
- The opportunities of representation of minority groups in decision making structures in school organisations shall be increased. For instance, working groups for the inclusion of minorities shall be set up, involving students, teachers and parents representatives.
- These working groups would have the task of following up the situation of minorities in the school and to participate in international cooperation activities.
- Adequate strategies should be developed in order to increase awareness of the importance of participation towards all school students.
- The level of participation of minority groups in the school should be periodically surveyed.
- The possibility for minority groups of young people to develop their competence in relation to participation shall be fostered, by for non-formal education activities and peer to peer projects.
- Specific challenges that individuals of minority groups face as an obstacle to their participation in school life need to be addressed.

GROUP 6: Inclusive Organisations

- Mapping the situation by analysing which groups that are included and which that are excluded
- Interviews and questionnaires in schools on inclusion
- Analysing the results and organising consultations with minority groups
- Create an action-plan for the inclusion of minorities, including specific action to be taken in order to include particular groups
- Mainstream the intercultural perspective in the whole organisation

- Clear and agreed steps for dealing with harassment and discrimination, followed-up by internal body that monitors the situation
- Establish an ombudsperson in the school student union, who deals with the inclusion of minorities and safeguard their rights
- Establish support structures, ensuring the representation of particular minority groups, for example informal networks and representative bodies
- Raising awareness on the concept of intercultural learning by for instance organising campaigns, training courses, activities and media action
- Ensuring that all materials of the organisation are reflecting the diversity of the surrounding society
- Producing materials in minority languages
- Lobbying institutions to include the ICL perspective
- Cooperating with different stakeholders in the field of education, such as teachers' unions, parents' councils and associations
- Encourage teachers to include the ICL perspective, by for instance organising training activities for teachers

All the participants were satisfied with the guidelines and proud of the work they had done. A majority of them said the guidelines would be a powerful and necessary tool in the follow-up back home, both internally and externally. As OBESSU will have its General Assembly, its highest decision-making body, in October, the guidelines will be put forward there and hopefully adopted as an official document and policy of OBESSU.

The programme continued with a session on action-plans for follow-up. All the participants were asked to make both individual and organisational action-plans, outlining the different activities that will follow on the study session. As the whole concept of multipliers forms the core of the follow-up and the participants hence have a crucial role to play, the preparatory team decided to have a short introduction to the concept and discuss it with the participants before letting them get started with the work. Afterwards the participants presented their plans and all of them had lots of different ideas. Almost all the organisations present wanted to bring back both the concept of intercultural learning and the guidelines to their national boards and make an effort to mainstream it in the whole organisation. Articles for different newspaper and school magazines were mentioned as well as awareness-raising campaigns. Although many of the school student unions wanted to focus on lobbying and advocacy, the different unions had chosen to focus on different areas of work; Iceland for instance wanted to improve the national curricula while Croatia wanted the Ministry of Education to map the situation of minorities in their educational system and then start a campaign on inclusion. The guidelines

were seen as a strong tool to use in the political work but also internally, for instance for the development of their own policies on intercultural learning and inclusion. Many of the unions also wanted to establish different working groups and committees focusing on minority inclusion and the guidelines for inclusive organisations were mentioned in several of the action-plans. The Austrian union had a drastic idea as they wanted to develop a new subject that would combine intercultural learning, philosophy and religion and thereby replace religion as a subject in school.

Afternoon session

In the afternoon OBESSU as an organisation presented its own action-plan, once again placing the work on intercultural learning and inclusion in a broader, political context as well as in the framework of OBESSU and its activities. Many of the participants had also asked about the potential support from the side of OBESSU. As mentioned before, OBESSU's experience in the field of intercultural learning was rather limited before the event, and as a consequence of that the board stated its commitment to continue developing its competencies and its stands in the issue. The guidelines will be the main tool for lobbying and advocacy but the organisation will make an effort to collect materials and resources as well as examples of best practice. Here the team reminded the participants of the upcoming General Assembly of OBESSU, which would enable them to amend the guidelines after having discussed them in their own organisations. The team also encouraged participants to take a look at the report of the event, as it provides them with resources and ideas of activities and approaches. The board invited the participants to ask for support whenever needed and as an example the possibilities of political support in the form of support letters for demands and campaigns was mentioned. OBESSU also said that they will explore the possibilities for some kind of follow-up event in a few years' time, as it would be a good way of not only following up but also supporting the member organisations in their struggles and contribute to the capacity-building of both member organisations and OBESSU itself.

With this positive spirit of returning back home to change the world a little, the preparatory team closed the event officially. The team had prepared certificates for all the participants and these were handed out with a CD with some materials and resources as well as pictures from the event.

After a short coffee break it was time for the final evaluation of the event. As mentioned before there were evaluation groups meeting every night discussing the day and general feelings. The preparatory team still wanted a common evaluation where all participants would be gathered to share their

feelings and in that way end the study session together by reflecting on what had been done. For the evaluation, the "method of the hand" was used, where the thumb represented something good, the index finger something to point out, the middle finger something that didn't work out, the ring-finger a commitment for the future and finally, the little finger a cherry on the top. In general the evaluation was very positive and the participants underlined how much they had learned and how the discussions during the week had broadened their views. Many of them also mentioned how eager they were to go back home and get started with the work. At the same time many of them also pointed out how much deeper we could have gone and how much there still was to learn.

The evaluation was completed with a written form that all participants were expected to fill in, as the team felt it was important to give them the chance to also share thoughts and feelings that are difficult to put forward in a group, such as more personal things and maybe also more critical feedback. The form also gave the team the possibility to ask about more practical issues, such as the accommodation and the practical organisation of the event.
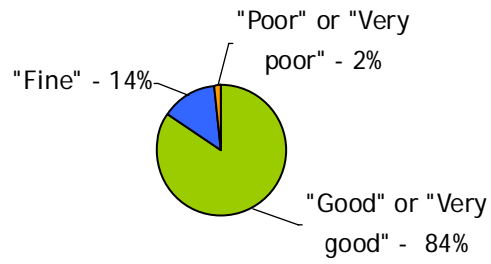
Evening session

In the middle of the week it had been announced that a social committee was needed for organising the farewell party on the last evening. The committee consisted of four participants that were given free hands to prepare everything related to the party. Apart from music and a few games, there were envelopes for the whole group on a wall, so that the participants could write messages to each other as well as to team members.

6. Evaluation of the study session by the participants

At the end of the study session, a questionnaire was distributed to the attendees in order to assess and evaluate the quality of the study session as regards: practical organisation, programme and content and social programme. Here below are the statistical outcomes of this evaluation session.

Practical organisation

"Poor" or "Very poor" - 2%

"Fine" - 14%

"Good" or "Very good" - 84%

Programme and content

"Poor" or "Very poor" - 10%

"Fine" - 16%

"Good" or "Very good" - 74%

Social programme

"Fine" - 17%

"Good" or "Very good" - 83%
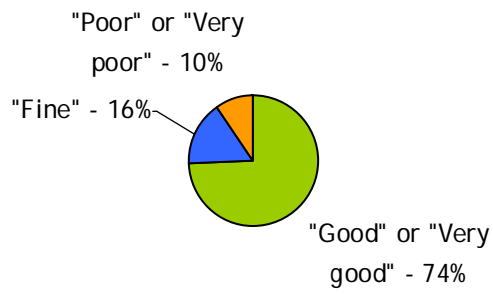
7. Follow-up of the study session by OBESSU

General follow-up

As mentioned above, both the participants and OBESSU committed themselves to different follow-up activities. The preparatory team was well aware of the 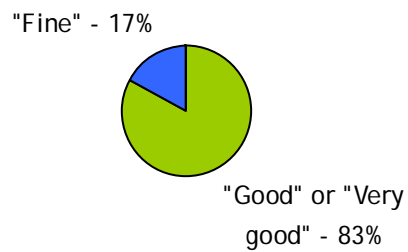fact that the plans for follow-up were made in a safe space, far away from the reality that the participants actually deal with, and as it is important to make sure that the participants are not left alone in their follow-up work, different support mechanisms have been discussed, such as e-mail lists, a forum on the OBESSU website as well as working group dealing with intercultural learning and inclusive education.

Follow-up by OBESSU

OBESSU saw this study session as the start of a deeper commitment and engagement in issues related to intercultural learning in formal education, and in the perspective of social inclusion in particular. Therefore the organisation is committed to develop both its competencies in the field and its stands. An effort will be made to increase the political work in the field, for which the guidelines will prove to be an essential tool, as they cover the main aspects of intercultural learning in formal education and are strongly anchored to the reality of the members of OBESSU. The guidelines will, as mentioned earlier, be presented at the General Assembly of OBESSU and hopefully adopted as an official document and policy.

Other related follow-up

Another result of the session was the birth of cooperation with the European Federation of Intercultural Learning, EFIL, which has resulted in a joint study session that is to be held with the Directorate of Youth and Sports of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in February 2009. The aim of the upcoming study session is to look into the possibilities of intercultural learning that school student participation offers. EFIL that works mainly with educational exchanges has another approach to intercultural learning, which enriches and triggers OBESSU to further develop its stands and views on intercultural learning in formal education. At the same time, OBESSU gives EFIL completely new perspectives, having a rights-based approach and a school student perspective when discussing education, as well as strong focus on

formal education. Representatives of both organisations will participate in the event.

OBESSU STUDY SESSION ON INTERCULTURAL LEARNING - PARTICIPANTS LIST

	Family Name	Name		Age	Nationality	Organisation
Members						
	Backman	Hanna	F	19	Finnish	FSS
	Balsys	Algimantas	M	16	Lithuanian	LMS
	Bojic	Danica	F	17	Serbian	UNSS
	Bukys	Povilas	M	17	Lithuanian	LMS
	Fandler	Simon	M	18	Austrian	AKS
	Gaigg	Vanessa	F	18	Austrian	AKS
	Gruner-Widding	Gwen	F	19	Danish	DGS
	Hodej	Rok	M	19	Slovenian	DOS
	Ilic	Dejana	F	19	Serbian	UNSS
	Juostaitė	Monika	F	16	Lithuanian	LMS
	Mustala	Emma	F	16	Finnish	FSS
	Ojasild	Annika	F	17	Estonian	ESCU
	Petrovic	Tatjana	F	16	Serbian	UNSS
	Dolenc	Matjaz	M	18	Slovenian	DOS
	Vistisen	Julie	F	17	Danish	EEO
	Volf	Rasmus	M	19	Danish	EEO
Observers						
	Zonić	Amir	M	18	BiH	ASuBiH
	Krajisnik	Nedim	M	18	BiH	ASuBiH
	Unnur Kristjánsdóttir	Gabriella	F	19	Icelandic	SIF
	Dögg Jónsdóttir	Lilja	F	19	Icelandic	SIF
Contacts						
	Gjika	Julinda	F	17	Albanian	Albanian YP
	Hoxha	Sergei	M	18	Albanian	Albanian YP
	Nikolic	Davor	M	19	Croatian	NVURH
	Babić	Domagoj	M	14	Croatian	NVURH
Prep Team						
	Wulff	Antonia	F		Finnish	OBESSU
	Gogl	Ingrid	F		Austrian	OBESSU
	Kaindlstorfer	Lukas	M		Austrian	AKS
	Guðmundsson	Ásgeir	M		Icelandic	SIF
OBESSU						
	Beccia	Giuseppe	M		Italian	OBESSU
	Favereau	Jonathan	M		French	OBESSU
	Rubow	Bjarke	M		Danish	OBESSU

OBESSU — Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions

COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

AGENDA STUDY SESSION
"EDUCATION AS A WAY TO INCLUSION, THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AS AN EDUCATIONAL METHOD"
European Youth Centre, Strasbourg

Time	20/07	21/07	22/07	23/07	24/07	25/07	26/07	27/07
08:00 / 09:30		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Departure Day
09:30 / 11:00		Introduction: Name games; Aims and objectives; Introduction: CoE+Obessu; Presenting the team & programme	Provocative statements; De-briefing	Experiencing exclusion; Stereotypes and prejudices: defining: xenophobia, islamophobia…; (eurorail à la carte), take a step forward	What is ICL, What isn't ICL	skills development Workshops	Finalising guidelines	
11:00		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
11:30 / 13:00		Introduction: Fears/expectations of Participants; "Code of Conduct"; Tour around the house	Participants input/view on concepts	What is a minority (ethnic, cultural); "Good" vs. "Bad" immigrants; Political correctness - where's the line	Whom does ICL serve/address,; Why ICL; inter-/multicultural	skills development	Finalising guidelines	
13:00 / 14:30		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
14:30 / 16:00		Group building (e.g. project balloon)	Expert Input: culture, religion, identity, tradition, (Hierarchies in the concepts)	Input: mechanisms of in-/exclusion, positive discrimination	Free Afternoon	what's my role as an individual/organisation; ICL in my organisation; Whe needs to do what (minority/majority)	Action plans (org/ind)	
16:00 / 16:30		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
16:30 / 18:00		Group work: Sharing realities	Who are I? Exploring identity, same-same - but different, Cultural change per Generation	"Back to school"; Applying the previous debate to the school reality		starting guidelines:; School (teachers, students), what can we do in the classroom?	Evaluation	
18:00 / 18:30		E-Groups	E-Groups	E-Groups		E-Groups	E-Groups	
19:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner in Town	Dinner	Dinner	
20:30	Welcome Evening, Ice Breakers	Intercultural Evening	Free Evening	Movie Night "Bend it like Beckham"	Free Evening	Free Evening	Farewell Party	

20/07: Arrival Day