



# MULTIPLUS+

## Migrant Multipliers Build Bridges

2020-1-AT01-KA204-078132

### IO1

## NUTSHELL REPORT

Analysis of national focus group results

**mht**consult  
March 2021



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



# CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. INTRODUCTION.....   | 3  |
| 2. WHO ARE THE MULTIPLIERS? .....  | 5  |
| 2.1 Introduction .....   | 5  |
| 2.2 Similarities, differences and challenges in the recruitment process.....               | 6  |
| 2.3 A brief overview of local recruitment methods and procedures .....                     | 7  |
| 2.4 Presentation of Multipliers in the initial focus groups .....                          | 9  |
| 2.5 Conclusions and learning points.....   | 11 |
| 3 SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS FROM THE EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE.....                      | 13 |
| 3.1 Introduction .....   | 13 |
| 3.2 Feedback from focus groups on the experience perspective .....                         | 14 |
| 3.3 Conclusions and learning points.....   | 18 |
| 4. SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS FROM THE INTERCULTURAL AND INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVE ..... | 20 |
| 4.1 Introduction .....   | 20 |
| 4.2 Feedback from focus groups on the intercultural and integration perspective.....       | 22 |
| 4.3 Conclusions and learning points.....   | 25 |
| 5 SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS FROM THE PEDAGOGICAL-DIDACTIC PERSPECTIVE .....           | 27 |
| 5.1 Introduction .....   | 27 |
| 5.2 Feedback from focus groups on the pedagogical-didactic perspective.....                | 28 |
| 5.3 Conclusions and learning points.....   | 31 |





# 1. INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of the MultiPLUS project is to contribute to migrants' integration in terms of improving means of dialogical communication and transfer of basic societal insight, information and – not least - participatory values and democratic practices.

For this purpose, the MultiPLUS project will focus on learning/teaching methods and tools to promote dialogical communication as a way to build bridges across the majority society and minority communities across Europe.

Thus, the MultiPLUS project aims to qualify representatives from migrant and minority communities to lead an effective dialogical communication with other members of their minority communities. These representatives are named *Multipliers* in that their role and function is to spread knowledge, insights and participatory practices to their communities like rings in the water. However, as will be seen from the following pages, it has turned out in the initial phase of the project that it is probably rather a *two-sided and dialectical function*, where Multipliers act as mutual communicators as well as mediators and facilitators between a majority society and minority communities.

This nutshell report presents the first research results from the MultiPLUS project. The report is based on structured focus group interviews with a total of 29 multipliers from the 5 partner countries. The aim has been to gather knowledge, reflections and assessments from experienced Multipliers regarding their previous communicative and educational practice as well as their future recommendations for new training programmes within the framework of the MultiPLUS project. The local focus groups are carried out using a common interview guide, structured from three overall themes:

- The experience perspective
- The intercultural and integration perspective
- The pedagogical-didactic perspective





Prior to the execution of the local focus groups, a didactic methodology has been prepared, which, in addition to the interview guide, also contains tips and good advice for creating a safe and trusting space for the Multipliers to answer and reflect on the main themes etc.

The didactic methodology has also established a common *reporting structure*, which largely follows the structure of the interview guide, in order to ensure that the structured findings in the interview guide could easily be transformed to a similar and comparable structure, when analyzed and compared across national reports in the present nutshell report.

As a next step, the results from the local focus groups - as described in this report - are intended to form the basis for the development and implementation of a new MultiPLUS training programme for local multipliers.

The forthcoming chapters contain, firstly, a presentation of the Multipliers who contributed to the initial focus groups. The presentation briefly points out the similarities and differences which can be observed across Multipliers from the 5 partner countries in the MultiPLUS project. This is followed by an in-depth review of the answers and results achieved within each theme in the question guide. This review draws particular attention to Multipliers' considerations of competence needs and requirements in relation to the Multiplier function, as well as the proposals they suggested for an upcoming training programme for Multipliers in the MultiPLUS project.



pexels.com

Christina Morillo - pexels.com





## 2. WHO ARE THE MULTIPLIERS?

### 2.1 Introduction

*"The integration of migrants is a complex term that challenges individuals as societies very much. One persisting question is how to reach migrants with information of societal importance, e.g. about health topics, schooling, waste management, gender equity, or others. The project MultiPLUS. Migrant MULTIPLIERS build Bridges centers a group of persons that contributes to filling this gap – the so-called Multipliers. Migrant Multipliers are migrant women, seldom men, well integrated in the host countries and at the same time in their community of origin; they speak the national language, e.g. German, very well, and are often role models and bridge-builders between the two communities or, wider, societies. For that reason, organizations, e.g. community centers, often hire them for conveying information about specific topics to migrants..."*

In the original application form, the Multipliers are described as quoted above. As stated in the quote, Multipliers fill a bridge-building function where the goal in general is to ensure that migrant communities are kept informed of important societal issues. Thus, the task is to pass on societal information, which can range from welfare and service-oriented offers and requirements within, for example, health, schooling and environmental regulations - to more value-oriented, cultural and behavioral expectations and requirements for compliance with gender equality procedures etc.

A further characteristic of Multipliers is that the function is largely performed by women, and it is implicit in the function that these are migrants who have come to the host country themselves either as children, young people or adults. However, unlike many citizens in migrant communities, Multipliers would master the host language, thus to have the linguistic preconditions to take on the role of the bridge builder, which is most often performed for local or national authorities who themselves have difficulty entering into a trusting dialogue with migrant and ethnic minority communities.





As described in the following sections, the recruited Multipliers in the project are characterized by a greater diversity in terms of both gender, language competence and immigration status. However, these deviations should not be interpreted in the way that the original description has been put out of hand in practical recruitment. It rather points to the fact that the Multiplier role has several facets, which must be weighted against each other in the practical execution of the function.

Perhaps gender does not play a significant role in the performance of the Multiplier function. Perhaps it is not decisive whether the Multipliers were born abroad or are descendants of immigrant parents. Perhaps the language skills can be compensated for etc. These are questions that can be asked to the entire group of Multipliers, who were initially recruited to the MultiPLUS project and who have agreed to pass on their experiences and considerations in the initial research phase to be used in the development of a relevant training programme as well as in the further development tasks in the project

The following sections first describe the experience gained in the recruitment phase across the partner organisations. This applies to both similarities and differences in the recruitment process and methods used. Subsequently, the overall group of Multipliers will be presented, based on a number of formal facts such as gender, age, family, country of origin, etc.

## 2.2 Similarities, differences and challenges in the recruitment process

From an overall view, the recruitment process has varied depending on whether the partners have access to make contact and recruit Multipliers in-house in their own organisations - or whether the partners had to establish contact to other organisations and networks in order to reach out to the target group and potential Multipliers.

This difference in prerequisites implies that some partners had greater challenges in the recruitment process than others. However, the differences are not generally reflected in the recruitment results, where there is largely uniformity in the







number of Multipliers in the first recruitment round for the focus group participation. In summary, as can be seen in the Table 1 below, the partners in total managed to recruit **30** Multipliers for the focus groups in full compliance with the expected number of 30. Seen in this light, a most solid result has been achieved in terms of recruitment of Multipliers in the first project phase.

## 2.3 A brief overview of local recruitment methods and procedures

### AUSTRIA

All 5 Multipliers did previously take part in pedagogical courses and training settings in the coordinating organisation OMEGA, and they all have Multiplier practice experience from working for OMEGA as well as for the City of Graz and other organisations. Thus, the recruitment was based on the *in-house method*, as OMEGA has access to an internal network of trained Multipliers.

### DENMARK

The recruitment procedures differed from the in-house method, even though a close collaborative organisation made itself available for the initial contact to possible Multipliers. In this sense, an *external network-based method* was implemented, including several process stages with representative meetings. However, the process was facilitated by the local, collaborative and perennial network to migrant and Muslim communities, which partly includes a school and partly an association with close ties to the school's clientele.

### ITALY

The situation was different, insofar that the partner organisation does not generally have direct contact with migrant communities or migrant students. This also indicated that the partner was not in advance associated or collaborating with organisations and associations with current contact to migrant communities. Consequently, a first step in the recruitment process was the outreach contact to local organisations that may facilitate a further contact to possible Multipliers. This process was obviously challenged by the COVID-19 situation, which prevented face-to-face meetings to communicate goals and methods in the MultiPLUS project. In summary, the Italian recruitment model can be described as an *external representative method* in which





external organisations outside the partner's usual network acted as intermediaries for Multipliers.

## SLOVENIA

The partner organisation had the opportunity to utilize the existing collaboration with migrants in the organisation's internal lines. From this position, the partner organisation was able to make a targeted recruitment by inviting Multipliers, who already did similar work as cultural mediators in their communities. Thus, the partner in Slovenia used a *semi-in-house method* by engaging Multipliers who either previously or currently performed tasks as cultural mediators for the organisation.

## SPAIN

The partner organisation needed to ally with a broad network of organisations within the Metropolitan area, where the partner is located, thus to connect with possible migrant Multipliers. The partner organisation was not acquainted with integration organisations prior to the MultiPLUS project and had to conduct an initial research on more than 30 organisations in order to gain contact to potential Multipliers in a time, where the COVID-19 pandemic complicates all communication and especially inquiries where you need a quick and positive response in order to proceed with your further obligations. Fortunately, the partner organisations received direct and positive contacts, thus to succeed in engaging Multipliers. The organisation addressed a written request to this network with an invitation to participate in the initial focus group. In summary, the Spanish partner like the Italian partner used an *external representative method* in the recruitment process.

## CONTEXTUAL ADAPTATION OF WRITTEN INFORMATION MATERIALS

It is worth noting that despite the variety of recruitment methods, all partners used written information materials for the Multipliers in the recruitment phase. Some partners also distributed the interview guide in advance to the focus group participants, and in some cases asked the participants to fill in a specific factual information sheet about their background etc. The didactic methodology has presented proposals for such information materials, which the partners have generally adapted to local needs, for example linguistic prerequisites among the participating Multipliers etc.







## 2.4 Presentation of Multipliers in the initial focus groups

The Table 1 on the next page includes a total overview of the first Multipliers in terms of factual information such as age, gender, civil status etc.

As shown in the table, there is a large spread in age among the Multipliers across partner countries. However, there may be a tendency for the majority of Multipliers to be in the "middle ages", i.e. in their thirties and forties. But regardless of the age differences, it is characteristic that everyone held various positions with emphasis on communicative, guiding or teaching functions either as volunteers or employees. This will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

Furthermore, when we compare with the introductory quote from the application form, it is remarkable that 9 out of 30 Multipliers are men, corresponding to just under one third.

In terms of immigrant status, an overwhelming majority are migrants or refugees, although some may have obtained citizenship in partner countries. The Danish Multipliers differ significantly in that they are all descendants. But it is worth noting that they are descendants of migrants from countries that make up a significant part of the non-Western population in Denmark with roots in the Middle East. In the other partner countries, the Multipliers represent a wide range of countries of origin with emphasis on Latin America, the Balkans and Eastern Europe.



*pixabay.com*




**Table 1: Overview of formal Multiplier data**

|   | Austria<br>5 persons  | Denmark<br>8 persons  | Italy<br>4 persons                                    | Slovenia<br>7 persons  | Spain<br>6 persons   |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Age   | 34-45   | 20-31<br>(29, 20,23,<br>27,31,25,24,28)   | 43-62<br>43, 43, 54, 62)                              | Late twenties,<br>thirties and early<br>forties                    | 26-60  |
| Gender  | <b>Female: 5</b>  | <b>Female: 6</b><br><b>Male: 2</b>  | <b>Female: 1</b><br><b>Male: 3</b>                    | <b>Female: 4</b><br><b>Male: 3</b>                                 | <b>Female: 5</b><br><b>Male:1</b>  |
| Civil status                                    | <b>Married:</b><br>4<br><b>Living alone:</b><br>1                               | <b>Married:</b><br>1<br><b>Living with family<br/>(parents and sib-<br/>lings):</b><br>4<br><b>Living alone:</b><br>3 | <b>Married:</b><br>3<br><br><b>Living alone:</b><br>1 |  |  |
| Parenting                                       | <b>Having children:</b><br>2 (5 and 3 chil-<br>dren)                            | <b>Having children:</b><br>2 (each 1 child)   | <b>Having children:</b><br>4 (1,2 or 3 chil-<br>dren) |  |  |
| Countries of<br>Origins                         | Egypt, Bosnia-Her-<br>cegovina, Roma-<br>nia, Venezuela,<br>Burkina Faso        | Denmark, with mi-<br>grant parents<br>from: Lebanon,<br>Palestine, Turkey   | Pakistan, Came-<br>roun, Hungary,<br>Ghana            | Arab countries,<br>Iran, Latin Amer-<br>ica, Albania, Ko-<br>sovo? | Ukraine, Russia,<br>Venezuela, Colom-<br>bia, Peru                               |
| Immigration sta-<br>tus                         | <b>Migrants:</b><br>5   | <b>Descendants:</b><br>8  | <b>Migrants</b>                                       | <b>Migrants and ref-<br/>ugees</b>                                 | <b>Migrants:</b><br>Some has formal<br>Spanish citizenship                       |
| Resident time                                   | 8, 10, 15, 6, 9<br>years  | -   | 20, 25, 8, 25 years                                   |  | From ½ year to<br>many years   |
| Educational level<br>from country of<br>origins | University in coun-<br>tries of origin + vo-<br>cational training in<br>Austria | Accountant, Uni-<br>versity educations:<br>MA, BA, Medi-<br>cine, Engineering   | Higher educations<br>and VET                          |  | University degrees<br>from countries of<br>origin and partly<br>Spain + educator |
| Work experience<br>in country of ori-<br>gins   | -   | Years: 10, 4, 1,<br>12,12,17,10,7,15  | Varies from 2-20<br>years                             |  |  |
| Work experience<br>in host country              | 5, 9, 0, 3, 7 years   | -   | 19, 20, 6, 25 years                                   |  | All have work ex-<br>perience in Spain   |





## 2.5 Conclusions and learning points

In summary, the initial research across the local focus groups provides a basis for the following conclusions:

- The partner organisations activated both internal and external networks in the initial recruitment of Multipliers for the MultiPLUS project. The tendency seems to be that recruitment has proceeded most smoothly, the more the partners had access to internal target groups. However, at the same time, the results suggest that strong external networks to migrant communities can also pave a solid path to the target group.
- There may be reason to pay more attention to the differences in recruitment conditions:

*Firstly*, the goal set for the implementation of the Multiplier training programme is to expand the local Multiplier groups, thus to reach a total of 12 Multipliers in each partner country.

*Secondly*, it is important to consider a situation, where partners in the future tasks may not be fully equal in terms of fulfilling the scope of workshops and participants etc. In the light of the first results, it may be recommended to discuss such issues in advance, thus to ensure an openness in the partnership about challenges, difficulties and possible solutions.

*Thirdly*, it is important to remember that Multipliers often have a busy everyday life and work life, which necessitates a tight planning of their time. Thus, in future recruitment processes, partners should take into account that Multipliers may not be available for long-term meetings and workshops on a short notice.

- The participating Multipliers differ in some aspects from the original description of the target group, as quoted above. This is especially true in relation to immigrant status, where the Danish group consists of descendants with roots in non-Western migrant communities. In addition, there is the gender difference, where the Multipliers in four of five partner countries include both men and women.





- It may be more important to focus on the fact that all Multipliers have indicated to have practical experience - and in many cases even extensive experience - in handling various functions in relation to migrant communities in terms of mediation, communication, education, guidance etc. These experiences will be summarized in the next chapter.



Artem Podrez - pexels.com





# 3 SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS FROM THE EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

## 3.1 Introduction

As a first item on the agenda of the local Multiplier focus groups, participants were kindly asked to explain their previous experiences with various forms of informative communication and dissemination to migrant target groups. This introductory theme served two purposes:

*Firstly*, the aim was to establish a picture of the participants' actual practical experiences. This did not only apply to the scope of dissemination activities and previous target groups. It also applied to the question of which types of communication the Multipliers were so far acquainted and familiar with, for example presentations for larger assemblies, one-to-one conversations and guidance, transmission of information to close family members and relationships or to strangers, etc.

*Secondly*, the aim was to create a safe space through somewhat neutral and concrete questions and statements on factual experience as a "soft" prelude to the next steps in the interview process. Thus, the initial round would warm up to the further considerations and even critical reflections on issues concerning integration and intercultural differences in learning traditions etc. In summary, the Multipliers were asked to briefly list examples of how they previously performed communicative and informative functions, with particular emphasis on the transfer of socially relevant topics from authorities in the majority society to migrant communities and possibly in other environments. The thematic questions were as follows:





**Let's start from your personal perspective and previous experiences in terms of communicating factual information or other communication situations in your local community / other circles of acquaintances:**

- Did you previously take part in courses and training regarding adult education, pedagogics and/or communication?
- What activities would that be? What would be the most important outcome of these training activities?
- What target groups did you approach – what would be the contextual framework?
- How did you act and communicate – what methods and tools did you use?
- What did you experience in these communication encounters – and what did you learn?

## 3.2 Feedback from focus groups on the experience perspective

### AUSTRIA

In Austria, the Multipliers did all attend training programmes in the coordinating organisation, OMEGA, which partly were supplemented with pedagogical courses in municipal and NGO settings. The Multipliers had to a certain degree practiced their qualifications by planning and implementing workshops for migrant audiences. This would include thematic topics such as:

- *Basic welfare systems and services in the host country* in terms of schooling, healthcare, social authorities, domestic and sexual violence prevention, environmental requirements as well as the labour market and employment structures.







- **Educational issues in the host country** in terms of handling of internet and new media, support of migrant parents in connection with schooling, children with special learning and behavioural challenges.

As a response to these main issues, the Multipliers were all able to refer to various concrete examples from their own practice and tasks to transfer knowledge about welfare and educational structures to migrant target groups, who would apparently mostly be women and their accompanying children. The methods used were not specified, and it seems that the Multipliers were more inclined to express their needs and requirements for new pedagogical-didactic tools:

*„It is important that we receive training to update ourselves. For example, everything we need to do is online now. It's difficult and challenging. Today this took us 20 minutes to do a digital situation... We should be able to do more interactive presentations....i"(Multiplier in Austria, November 2020).*

Multipliers went on to emphasize the need to build a broad and varied pedagogical-didactic toolbox. The argument is that the role of Multipliers requires the skills to establish a close correspondence between the specific communicative context and the methods used. Thus, the competence to deliver a **context-related communication** seems to be high on the priority list.

## DENMARK

In Denmark, the Multipliers turned out to have a wide range of experience in terms of communicative, bridge building and even pedagogical tasks. A couple of the Multipliers did previously participate in a long-term training programme as intercultural ambassadors, arranged by the Danish partner. Although they all have experience in solving communicative tasks, they have not previously attend a training course together as multipliers. In general, their experience could roughly be divided into education and work-related communication activities on the one hand – and citizen-related and civil society tasks on the other hand. In summery, the most significant topics would be:





- *Transfer of information from public authorities and housing associations* to migrant and ethnic minority residents with deficient Danish language skills.
- *Mentoring and educational support* in homework cafés, schools and special residents for children and youth with an ethnic minority background - and for some audiences with special learning challenges and needs. Furthermore, the educational area would include peer-based mentoring.

The nature and amount of experiences would reflect that some of the Multipliers are in possession of professional competences acquired through education within pedagogy, psychology and mediation at different levels.

An important competence is also that the Danish Multipliers are *bilingual* in the best sense of the word. They grew up with the Danish language and, at the same time, master the mother tongue of their parents and families.

Even so, it is noteworthy that the Multipliers, similar to other Multipliers, did not in particular elaborate on specific pedagogical and didactic methods used in previous assignments. They mainly concentrated on the needs and recommendations for a new training programme within the framework of the MultiPLUS project.

## ITALY

In Italy, all Multipliers previously took part in training with an emphasis on cultural mediation and language teaching. Both themes were aimed at strengthening the Multipliers' ability and competences to communicate properly with migrant target groups. However, the communication perspective went hand in hand with the goal of giving the Multipliers a greater insight into the culture of the migrant target groups. The training in language teaching first and foremost served a practical aim, where migrants and other working newcomers improve their abilities to cope with an everyday language in the new host country.





The Multipliers delivered some examples of learning materials, manuals and power-point presentations that were generally used in face-to-face educational activities for migrants. The Multipliers also highlighted the pedagogical use of song lyrics to improve language learning.

With references to the materials used, the Multipliers pointed to future needs and called especially for a *practical teaching guide*, presenting pedagogical-didactic methods and tools for the teaching and guidance of migrant learners.

## SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, the Multipliers represented a wide range of experiences in pedagogical terms of communicating with their respective communities, which they a.o. achieved in previous collaboration with the partner organisation through training in the fields of cultural mediation, intercultural capacity building, pedagogical training targeting adult education, active and emphatic listening, target group adapted communication, psychosocial aspects of target group needs, with special weight on migrant children. All practical experience was gained in informal settings through workshops conducted by the Multipliers themselves.

In conclusion, all the Multipliers are very well equipped in terms of both pedagogical training and practice as cultural mediators and trainers. Still, they argued that their experiences were predominantly theoretical-oriented training, where they - after testing their knowledge and methodology in practical mediation - could ascertain that they needed more practice-oriented training.

As one example, The Multipliers pointed to the value and impact of case-based training and use of roleplaying. They also called for methods of guiding migrants in personal matters.

Furthermore, they made aware of the need to strengthen their own *computer skills*. But the question is whether they also considered such upskilling as useful in connection with migrant training.

Finally, the Multipliers actually highlighted positively the idea of *combining* pedagogical-didactic methods from the host country and migrants' countries of origin, such as planned in the MultiPLUS project.





## SPAIN

In Spain, the Multipliers were already trained in various communicative and pedagogical subjects in terms of mentoring, training and guidance of migrants. As an example, one Multiplier has been affiliated to integration work in the Red Cross for more than a year, while another Multiplier is especially engaged in human rights education as well as methods to counteract social exclusion etc.

In terms of needs and requirements for future training, the importance of *competent and contextual communication* was in focus. Furthermore, two of the Multipliers strongly recommended the incorporation of *artistic methodologies*, like for instance the use of theatre, to support the learning and improvement of empowerment and creativity as ways for migrants to cope with the integration process in a new country.

Finally, how to show appreciation and respect in training processes for newcomers, who generally may have strong linguistic difficulties in expressing themselves and thereby showing themselves as competent individuals, is also a crucial and basic qualification in the Multiplier profile. This corresponds with the ability to use participatory and including methods.

### 3.3 Conclusions and learning points

In summary, the initial research across the local focus groups provides a basis for the following conclusions and learning points to be addressed in the following project activities:

- It is remarkable that Multipliers across the partner countries only sporadically concretized the communicative and pedagogical methods they used so far in their dissemination work. To stay in the terminology of the MultiPLUS project, the Multipliers apparently preferred to pass on experience at a *WHAT* level and largely not at a *HOW* level. In contrast, the Multipliers have to a much greater extent highlighted their needs for further training on a practical-methodical level. Thus, the general feedback from the focus groups confirms the project's thesis that





Multipliers, despite many learning activities, are not necessarily trained in describing their methodological approaches to the Multiplier tasks.

- However, it should be mentioned in fairness that the strong focus on registering the WHAT level during the focus groups probably also reflects the fact that the interview guide to a certain degree highlights this level, even though the HOW level is present and points to the opportunity to deepen methodical discussions. Furthermore, in some cases there would be challenges with the time factor in the implementation of the focus group. In this light, partners would obviously concentrate on recording Multipliers' concrete experiences at the WHAT level rather than asking more in-depth into the HOW level. The learning point is that in future workshops and meetings with Multipliers, there should be an opportunity to elaborate and reflect more deeply on methods used.
- It is also a general trace in the Multipliers' feedback on the experience perspective that they primarily focus on the *practical* pedagogical and communicative exercise of their role, whereas the *theoretical* level seems not to be in focus when describing their future needs and expectations. This may well be an expression of the fact that Multipliers generally perceive their own role from a *practice-based change perspective*. From this perspective, it is important to deliver information to migrant communities that may promote and improve integration and change in terms of migrants' perception and handling of the surrounding majority society.





# 4. SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS FROM THE INTERCULTURAL AND INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVE

## 4.1 Introduction

The concept of culture and varieties of cultural traditions, norms and preferences are generally of high interest for the development processes in the MultiPLUS project. This applies in particular to the impact and significance of culture in communication. Consequently, the question of intercultural communication in training settings for migrants has high priority in the upskilling of Multipliers. This includes the culturally defined differences that may occur in the understanding of learning processes and pedagogical-didactic approaches.

From these points of view, the intercultural perspective was already addressed in the initial focus groups and will later be elaborated much more in future project activities. However, the perception of what intercultural communication entails is not unambiguous. In some interpretations, it is primarily about knowing particular forms of behavior when arriving to a foreign country, for example as a business traveler. It has been a traditional – and rather stationary - approach to the concept of intercultural communication, indicating that culture is something eternally valid, unchangeable and even natural.

But over a number of years, intercultural communication is increasingly linked to the integration process itself, where migrants and ethnic minorities must be integrated and recognized as equal citizens of the host countries. This debate is immediately much more difficult, because it doesn't merely involve the unilateral adaptation of migrants to the cultural structures of a new society. On the contrary, it represents a *reciprocal* process in which the intercultural perspective consists in building *mutual understanding* and recognition of diversity and different universes of experience







within a wide range of life areas. One of these areas is education and acquisition of knowledge and methods.

Consequently, the intercultural and integration perspectives are closely linked when focusing on training experiences and activities to upskill Multipliers to the encounters with migrant learners – and, for that matter, with majority representative learners, who actually needs to be aware of the diversity of welfare needs and expectations among all citizens in society and local communities.

From these considerations, questions about the intercultural and integration perspective in learning and training activities were addressed in the Multiplier focus groups:

**Culture and different cultural traditions in communication and pedagogical-didactic approaches are central to the Multiplus+ project. Let's reflect a little on such cultural diversity. What are your views on this issue – and what did you learn from previous experience:**

- Do you see significant differences in terms of cultural traditions within communicative and pedagogical-didactic methods, when comparing your country of origins with European traditions?
- What differences and similarities would you point to?
- How would you explain such differences, and what impact do they have on adult educational efforts towards migrants in your present country? Please, give examples.





## 4.2 Feedback from focus groups on the intercultural and integration perspective

### AUSTRIA

In Austria, two aspects in the integration perspective were in particular stated from the Multipliers: the tolerance towards elderly people and the approach to women who bring their children to their own educational activities.

Especially the lack of separation of adult activities and the presence of children gives often rise to intercultural dilemmas and direct distancing in the general integration debate in Western countries with a generally high degree of family separating structures in everyday life with widespread paid work for both men and women - and widespread use of non-domestic childcare etc.

Cultural-based differences in elderly care are also reflected in educational and communicative settings for migrant women from sociocultural contexts, where the family-based way of life and extended family forms are to a certain extent transferred and continued in the new country. Thus, the *sociocultural gender perspective* constitutes an important prerequisite and challenge for migrant women's educational possibilities - and thus also for Multipliers' communication and guidance in terms of requirements and expectations for gender behavior and opportunities in the host country.

### DENMARK

In Denmark, the participants did not directly respond to the questions about the integration and intercultural perspective in terms of migrant challenges. As descendants, they all attended the Danish school- and education system. This implies that participants in their own schooling and education have not in the same way as migrants experienced differences or even schisms between different sociocultural approaches to pedagogy and didactics, even though the bilingual position may for some descendants in general cause some challenges.





However, it is noteworthy that they brought about some important considerations in terms of the need for training and upskilling in intercultural communication. Seen from the intercultural perspective, the Multipliers disseminated information about migrant/minority communities, cultures and traditions etc. to Danish authorities. This includes a.o. to communicate information about minority communities and their own association activities to the local police, to local politicians and even to the local integration council. In other words, this kind of intercultural communication, dissemination and bridge building may involve all parts of the municipality's institutional areas of authority.

In this context, the Multipliers points to intercultural challenges, when they from their common experiences are expected to be particularly well-adjusted as young people in their contact to public authorities of various types. They must, so to speak, prove their worth to a greater extent than ethnic Danish young people. It raises the important questions about how to communicate in a way that Multipliers can maintain their personal and professional dignity - and at the same time communicate effectively with authorities on behalf of minority communities and citizens.

## ITALY

In Italy, the Multipliers pointed to various examples of cultural differences which in practice may have a deep impact on the communication situation. Different perceptions in terms of time, authority and bodily language norms do often affect teaching situations. When not addressed directly, such differences can result in mutual irritation and even prejudice about *the others*.

Furthermore, similar to other Multipliers, the Italian Multipliers drew a close line between general integration issues and the importance of the intercultural aspect for practical communication and teaching. The societal structures around integration will always *reflect itself* in educational and learning contexts, because it precisely reflects the life situation of migrant learners, which can not be completely separated from situations where migrants are involved in communications on societal topics in the host society.

## SLOVENIA





In Slovenia, the Multipliers would refer to culture-related differences, which, firstly, is reflected in the behavior of some migrants in relation to their participation in education - and secondly, their expectations and experiences in relation to pedagogy and teaching methods. The Multipliers particularly pointed out the cultural differences associated with *gender*, where more patriarchal attitudes may result in female migrants not being given the opportunity to participate in education because family perceptions and traditions in terms of the gender division of labor maintain the women as responsible for home and childcare, thereby binding them in both a mental and physical sense to the domestic arena.

In terms of culturally related teaching and learning practices, Multipliers highlighted in particular the cultural-didactic differences that basically reflect differences in *cultural concepts of authority and behavior*. This traditional image is that the teacher is an authority who conveys a knowledge that the learners are not expected to discuss let alone question. These are traditions that migrants bring into the new teaching contexts in the host country, and which do not harmonize with the dialogical approaches, methods and expectations of learners' active participation that characterize adult education in the host country.

In summary, the intercultural-didactic perspective represents a visible challenge that places special demands on Multipliers in both teaching and supervision. Based on these experiences, the Multipliers call for training that addresses the gender aspects and focuses on the use of *motivational and participatory methods* to strengthen women's participation and understanding of gender equality, parental participation, etc.

## SPAIN

In Spain, the Multipliers generally emphasize the *reciprocity* in intercultural communication, meaning that the communication situation will always be incorporated in a wider societal context. In the Multiplier training perspective this may indicate that Multipliers are not merely focused on the professional topic, for instance technical challenges in the language learning. The communication must also somehow reflect the societal context, where for instance human rights and discrimination may influence on migrants and ethnic minorities' learning processes.





Some multipliers declared that there is a lot of misinformation going on across the majority community and minority communities. It helps to create ethnic-cultural gaps and barriers which go both ways, magnifies cultural differences and blocks a mutual intercultural understanding and respect.

In summary, the Multipliers seem to have a strong focus on the need to incorporate a larger societal perspective in the training of migrants. Although it is not possible to change legislation or eliminate discrimination and xenophobia overnight - it is still important as bridge builders to listen to migrants' experiences and, at the same time, make them clear that integration is about understanding and accepting rules and societal frameworks in the new country and society, even though they may differ from traditions and norms in the country of origin.

### 4.3 Conclusions and learning points

In summary, the initial research across the local focus groups provides a basis for the following conclusions and learning points to be addressed in the following project activities:

- There seems to be a slight tendency for Multipliers across partner countries to refer more to the learning needs of migrants rather than to their own learning needs in the context of teaching and mentoring processes for migrants. These are, of course, two sides of the same coin, insofar as migrants' learning preconditions and learning needs should be reflected in the way Multipliers organize their teaching and guidance.

It is mentioned several times that integration as well as discrimination and societal us-and-them positions according to experience are an important focal point for the pedagogical work. It is presumably an important clue that Multipliers in a new MultiPLUS training need to explore and elaborate on how they in their own teaching and communication can process the meaning of contextual societal conditions, while at the same time conveying a specific topic, such as vaccine procedures in the COVID-19 pandemic.











# 5 SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS FROM THE PEDAGOGICAL-DIDACTIC PERSPECTIVE

## 5.1 Introduction

The pedagogical-didactic perspective plays a central role in the MultiPLUS project in that training and competence building for Multipliers are the project's key words to improve the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities through better provision of information and knowledge communication about the surrounding society.

In this way, the pedagogical perspective is closely linked to the intercultural perspective and the Multipliers' perception and practicing of their role as intercultural bridge builders in a societal integration process.

But at the same time, there is reason to be aware that pedagogy and didactics do not *in themselves* have an integrative purpose. Pedagogy and didactics are fundamental parts of all teaching, regardless of the target groups and their prerequisites. The pedagogical perspective only becomes relevant for the integration when it is linked to the specific communicative functions that Multipliers are obliged to perform.

On the other hand, it may be the question of whether not all teaching and learning processes contains an intercultural perspective, insofar as both children, young people and adult learners in many contexts come from different sociocultural lifestyles and environments, whether they share the same or different ethnic backgrounds.

In summary, the pedagogical and didactic training constitutes an important methodological area for Multipliers, based on their communication role. This may, for example, apply to general methods for planning and conducting workshops, which by means of different methodical approaches ensure a learning value for the participants.





But at the same time, it is necessary for Multipliers to be aware of the interplay between pedagogy and intercultural issues, which are inevitably at stake in teaching and guiding migrants – as well as in most other training settings.

From such considerations, the Multipliers were asked to reflect on the following questions in the local focus groups:

### Let's consider your experiences from a pedagogical-didactic perspective:

- From your experience and reflections: how does educational efforts towards migrant – and also children and youth from migrant communities – affect the general integration and feeling of belonging in migrant communities?
- Do you see special challenges in the majority learning/teaching approaches, principles and practices in terms of integrating both young children and adults with other cultural backgrounds in educational activities?
- What may be solutions in a future perspective?

## 5.2 Feedback from focus groups on the pedagogical-didactic perspective

### AUSTRIA

In Austria, the Multipliers commented on challenges in teaching and learning processes which also returns the arrow to the intercultural perspective:

*„All the work is group oriented, not individualistic. Individually. That's a big difference. Co-evaluation, collective opinion, democratic establishment...participation is different...people who always speak and those who speak less or not, never take part....For me, a topic would be how you can change the dynamic in groups, how you can reduce conflicts..." (Multiplier, November 2020).*





Another point was that parents' lack of language skills can be crucial to their children's schooling and learning conditions. This may both include the learning level and at the social level, where examples shows that children may be bullied due to their parents' language deficiencies. In other words, there is a risk of transferring stigma from migrant parents to their children. This is a situation that Multipliers should keep an eye on and help eliminate through teaching and communication.

## DENMARK

*„It would be nice to learn some practical methods to earn some practical methods to be able to formulate yourself more specifically to different target groups. This also applies to linguistic communication...“ (Multiplier, December 2020).*

In Denmark, the Multipliers presented a wide range of ideas and proposals for a MultiPLUS training programme. All suggestions were clearly reflected in the light of the knowledge and experience they already possessed.

As one example, several of the Multipliers pointed to the interest for learning more about **body language**, which would include a combined theoretical and practical introduction.

Furthermore, practical communicative methods and tools in general will, in summary, have the highest priority. One specific request is to become more familiar with **interactive** communication methods, where the use of video has an important place on the priority list. The use of video may be especially suitable for training how to appear in communicative situations, where it is important to adapt to the needs and prerequisites of the target groups. **Online-based** methods are also mentioned as areas of interest

Finally, the concept and use of **guidance and supervision methodologies** are very welcome, including teamwork methods to deliver clear and transparent information through dialogical approaches and tools.





## ITALY

In Italy, all Multipliers agreed that training and learning can help enhancing the social integration. At the same time, training and learning is for many a path to greater well-being and self-esteem, which in itself can help strengthen the individual integration – and even a more collective feeling of belonging, when learning processes are anchored in community settings.

The Multipliers underlined the importance of the *linguistic learning*, as language is not merely a question of direct communication. Language also opens the door to a *conceptual insight* and understanding which a.o. helps to promote learning in a broader sense, for example understanding and approving of new approaches and methods to learning. Consequently, language is the key to general learning and qualification.

## SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, the Multipliers emphasized the influence that cultural differences in learning and teaching traditions have on migrants' learning process. The conclusion was that it is important to establish a pedagogical-didactic platform, where migrants step by step get used to learning methods, where *active participation*, dialogue and mutual feedback are paramount. At the same time, it places great demands on the learning space, where migrants in the new situation must feel safe and confident. This is a crucial point, even if workshops and other communication sessions take place in the migrants' own surroundings. From this perspective, the Multiplier function consists of laying the *seeds for greater empowerments*.

## SPAIN

In Spain, Multipliers concluded that a main point is to ensure a good and efficient communication and *dialogue* between the majority society and migrants as a basic element in teaching and learning. But this process is at the same time dependent on the history of minorities being more widely accepted and recognized in the "great" history of society as part of this history.





From a pedagogical point of view, language learning would be an essential part of the communicative promotion and improvement. However, language learning cannot *in itself* remove societal tensions and discriminatory tendencies.

## 5.3 Conclusions and learning points

In summary, the initial research across the local focus groups provides a basis for the following conclusions:

- It is important to establish a pedagogical-didactic platform, where migrants step by step get used to methods and working methods, where active participation, dialogue and mutual feedback are paramount. At the same time, it places great demands on the learning space, where migrants in the new situation must feel safe and confident. This will also apply even if workshops and other communication take place in the migrants' own communities.
- In continuation of this, it seems obvious to include a practice-based introduction and exercises in various dialogical methods in the new training program for Multipliers. Although such approaches are generally known among the Multipliers, their feedback suggests that concrete case examples may be needed in order to discuss how dialogical and participatory methods are implemented in intercultural contexts where one-way communication and more authoritarian learning methods may characterize many participants' prepositions.
- It is implicit in the original application form that Multipliers, due to their own migrant background, have personal knowledge and special prerequisites for relating both empathetically and soberly to the cultural-related learning preconditions they encounter in migrant communities. Apart from obvious linguistic benefits, it may be important to openly address and discuss in a training programme, whether and how a common ethnic-cultural background can be utilized in the Multiplier function - and where there may be pitfalls in terms of biased reassumptions or unconscious distances etc.

At the same time, Multipliers would generally themselves be testimonies that as primary sources to *both* the majority society and minority communities, they







are potentially the excellent build bridges. However, an important prerequisite is to provide them with a methodology that offers practical tools to perform a communication and teaching which ensure the necessary link between information, knowledge, perception and learning among their audiences.



pixabay.com

