

TRAINING AND LEARNING FOR ACTORS IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

The basic goal of the Migrações e Desenvolvimento (Migration and Development) DP was the promotion of a culture of tolerance and the establishment of intercultural dialogue. The DP members have established two “territorial pilot pacts” to improve the participation of immigrants in Seixal and Odivelas, which are municipalities on the outskirts of Lisbon.

These territorial pacts provided a basis for better coordination and more effective use of local resources in integrated action, involving informal contacts with immigrants and their offspring in order to:

- Establish relationships of mutual trust and to identify key-problems;
- Set up an information centre and a mobile information point for migrants;
- Improve the professional practices of staff members in intercultural relationships and in providing support to migrants.

In terms of the last issue, four training courses have been held for those who work directly or indirectly with migrant populations and ethnic and cultural groups - two for each territorial pact. The training needs were identified through direct contact with the professionals and their agencies or institutions (i.e. the provider's point of view) and through informal contacts and open debates in each territorial pilot pact area (i.e. the consumer's point of view).

The courses comprise six sessions of six hours duration and address the following topics:

- Migration panorama and trends;
- Intercultural learning;
- Gender discrimination;
- Integration policies and legal issues;
- Integration of the Roma community.

The training approach is flexible and tries to incorporate and accommodate the knowledge and experience of the trainees. The overall objective is to destroy any misconceptions or prejudices that might be held by the trainees and to change discriminatory professional practices by developing new approaches. The courses aim to improve the capacities of members of staff to communicate in intercultural environments. All of the topics are underpinned by the provision of information about migration flows, and changing trends and policies and good practices related to the integration of migrants.

Until the end of 2004, a total of 60 people participated in the pilot phase of these training activities and the DP has found that the involvement of staff working in different institutions and agencies has increased the added-value of the training. In a second phase, the DP prepared further materials to support in-service training of larger numbers of actors, including

- a training manual on *“Citizenship and cultural diversity in professional practices”* covering all topics that were addressed in the pilot course;
- a *Citizenship Resource Guide* aimed at those working with migrants and ethnic minorities, which seeks to improve the way in which public services operate and respond;
- a presentation entitled *“What if it was you? Benefits of non-discrimination and cultural diversity in business”* to raise employers' awareness of their social responsibility and to support them in the management of human resources, diversity and equal opportunities.

These materials are now widely used in the two existing pact areas and are being disseminated within the context of similar other territorial pacts in the country.

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