

European Fair Skills

Exchanging good practice in strengthening community-embedded prevention of group-focused enmity, hate crime and violent right-wing extremism

SUMMARY



Country:

SLOVAKIA

Partners:

*REACH – Research and Education Institute
Center for Community Organizing (CKO)*



A project by:



European Fair Skills
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Prevention of and Fight
against Crime Programme of
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INTRODUCTION

European Fair Skills is a project organized jointly by the German non-governmental organization Cultures Interactive (project coordinator) and three non-governmental organizations from Central Europe (project partners): REACH Research and Education Institute (Slovakia), Ratolest (Czech Republic) and Kontiki (Hungary). The project was co-funded by the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Program of the European Union and the Federal Agency of Civic Education, Germany.

In the last eight years, CI has developed and tested many target group specific (model) project approaches and concepts as well as various methods of community-oriented prevention work. Whether it be workshops with young people, further training for education professionals or advising and coaching local civil society, political actors or administration, to act long term and sustainably against group-focused enmity, hate crime and violence motivated by right-wing extremism, a holistic community approach as well as offers tailored to different stakeholders are required.

The European Fair Skills project was developed as a response to the current situation in the Central European region. During their involvement with the European Commission's Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), CI encountered many prevention work practitioners, particularly those active in the fields of right-wing extremism and religious fundamentalism. It was made clear that, until now, prevention work has been particularly underdeveloped in Central and East European countries. It has been also observed that discriminatory attitudes in certain parts of the society have strongly taken hold in these countries, which is made apparent by organized militant right-wing groups, anti-Semitic rhetoric, attacks motivated by homophobia or attacks on Roma settlements. The goal of the joint European Fair Skills project is therefore to test transferring approaches for community-oriented and target group specific prevention work which have proven effective in Germany to different national contexts of Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Fair Skills Method

The Fair Skills approach, as developed and defined by Cultures Interactive, is based on several principles:

- Non-formal civic education. This segment includes educational activities about civic society, human rights, mediation and conflict transformation and the acquisition of communication soft skills leading to the strengthening of civic responsibility.
- Youth cultural workshops. An interactive form of informal education is a crucial element, using youth subcultures via which the civic education topics are communicated and explained to the youngsters, while at the same time inspiring them to spend their free time in a meaningful way.
- Group work. The last element includes the self-awareness group work on reflection and grievances, employing the so-called „narrative approach” and inspiring young people to become peer facilitators and to become active in their community.

In each of the participating countries, a wide range of diverse actions were implemented, all aimed at different audiences and pursued aims:

- a) Fair Skills trainings: training multipliers to implement a civil society youth culture work approach which also conducts on-site training with at-risk adolescents;
- b) Local Derad trainings: further training aimed at social workers, educators and youth culture stakeholders for primary and secondary prevention work with youth;
- c) Round Table discussions: a regional network for right-wing extremist prevention with local stakeholders from the government, administration, civil society, social work, schools, etc., enhancing the exchange of knowledge and experiences on the national level.

ACTIVITIES

Implementation Workshop in Slovakia

Date: September 13, 2015

Location: The office of Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, Bratislava

Number of participants: 4

Coordinators: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs + Cultures Interactive

The Implementation workshop that took place on September 13th in Bratislava kicked off the implementation period of the EFS project in Slovakia. Taking place one day before the first public event, a Round Table with stakeholders, the Implementation workshop served as a preparatory and planning event for future activities to be implemented in Slovakia. The meeting was attended by the Slovak then-coordinator Adam Potočný from the Slovak then-coordinator organization, the Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA) and three lecturers from Cultures Interactive.

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The organization of the event went smoothly and without any major complications, except for the delayed event date, which occurred mainly due to the longer time needed for the preparatory phase of the project as well as other time constraints.

Round Table I

Date: September 14, 2015

Location: Hotel Falkensteiner, Bratislava

Number of participants: 12

Coordinators: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs + Cultures Interactive

The first Round Table in Slovakia took place on September 14th (Monday), only one day after the EFS Implementation workshop, with the participation of Slovak and German EFS coordinators and the aim to kick off the EFS implementation in Slovakia. The main goal of the Round Table was to initiate a discussion about the goals of the EFS project with different stakeholders in Slovakia, engage them in the upcoming phases of the EFS project and to discuss potential challenges with regard to their own experiences and lessons learned within the youth work in each respective country. The Round Table was organized by the then-coordinating Slovak organization, the Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA).

This one-day event took place in the form of semi-structured discussion led by CI

coordinators along with local Slovak coordinators at the Falkensteiner Hotel in Bratislava. The participants represented diverse backgrounds, including research institutions, academia, regional as well as national NGOs and foundations (e.g. the Comenius University in Bratislava, the Alexander Dubček University in Trenčín, the Centre for Culture and Ethnicity Research, the Banská Bystrica local Initiative “Not in Our Town!”, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Open Society Foundation, etc.). The participants were targeted in a way to ensure different organizations and institutions working in the field of prevention and countering extremism and radicalization were included in order to gain as diverse perceptions on the issue as possible, as well as to gather observations and lessons learned to help the EFS implementation process in Slovakia.

The discussion covered three basic topics. First, the current situation and the most recent incidents related to increasing public support for right-wing extremist parties, foreshadowing the approaching parliamentary elections that were supposed to take place in March of the following year, in which the right-wing extremist party People’s Party Our Slovakia received unprecedented support from the voters – especially the younger generation. The aim of this debate topic was mostly to familiarize our German colleagues with the situation at hand, but also to gather as many individual perceptions, experiences and accounts as possible from the national as well as the regional level for the purpose of future phases of the EFS project. Secondly, an important aspect of the discussion was the comparison between the German and the Slovak environment, with specific attention devoted to the Cultures Interactive experiences in the field of youth work and deradicalization programs in eastern Germany. Thirdly, a substantial part of the discussion was devoted to the issue of national networking, including further cooperations with regard to the EFS activities planned for the next year.

The event can be considered a successful and very helpful kick-off for the EFS project, especially its Slovak part. The overall potential of the EFS project was reflected by two indicators, the first being a general level of interest in the project as well as positive feedback from its participants, and the second being enthusiasm to be actively involved in further stages of the project's development. Most of the Slovak participants agreed to be a part of a wider prospective (international) network of people from different Central European countries interested in deradicalization work, while at the same time expressing their interest in cooperating on upcoming activities and programs.

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With the exception of its date, the preparations for the first EFS Round Table took place according to plan. Although originally scheduled for May 2015, a decision was made to postpone the event due to time constraints as well as more time needed in order to clarify the purpose and content of the meeting with regard to the aims of the project. September was chosen as a more suitable month based on the availability of the project coordinators as well as the participants (especially considering the unpredictable and busy period before the approaching summer holidays).

However, the biggest challenge turned out to be the turnout of participants. Although substantially more people expressed interest in attending the meeting and confirmed their participation, the selected date turned out to have a negative impact on the attendance rate, as less than half of the participants actually took part. The main reason for this was the fact that the following day, September 15th (Tuesday), was national holiday in Slovakia, which presumably substantially influenced the availability of participants.

Train-the-Trainer I

Date: September 18 - 19, 2015

Location: Brno, Czech Republic

Number of participants: 10 (5 Slovak and 5 Czech)

Coordinators: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, Eruditio Publica + Cultures Interactive

The first Train-the-Trainer workshop, a joint event of Slovak and Czech project partners, took place on September 18th and 19th (Friday and Saturday) in Brno, Czech Republic. Following the narrowly focused Implementation workshop and the subsequent first Round Table discussion focused on a wider scope of stakeholders, the aim of the Train-the-Trainer was to focus specifically on the Fair Skills methods and the methodology developed by Cultures Interactive, and to pass it along to selected trainers from the NGO communities of in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Last but not least, the aim was also to motivate the trainers to develop their own plan on how the methodology could be used in their own work with youngsters.

The training consisted mainly of demonstrations of specific methods and exercises that could be used in youth work and that together form the integrated methodology of Fair Skills, presented by trainers from Cultures Interactive. During the two days, participants got a chance to test the methods on themselves and discuss their applicability in their home context and every-day work. Moreover, it was a unique opportunity to compare their experiences among each other within each national group and as well as between all three participating countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany. As for Slovak participants, the regions outside the capital were prioritized and their selection reflected both the differences between regions and the background of their work. Three different regions were represented (Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Rimavská Sobota) and the diversity in activities of participants was also reflected (i.e. activists, field workers, researchers, youth workers and educators were all represented).

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Due to the longer preparatory phase of the project and time constraints, the training was postponed. Moreover, the implementation of the first Train-the-Trainer faced two crucial obstacles. First, the two-day training proved to not provide enough time and space to train the youth

workers, who expressed interest (and necessity) to rather attend one longer and (maybe) more exhausting but at the same time more comprehensive session in exploring the EFS methodology and lessons learned from CI. For this reason, more emphasis should have been given to adapting the specific EFS methods as well as the discussion about the methodology in general, mainly with regard to the substantial differences in context and environment between all the countries involved. This obstacle was compensated by the inclusion of the second Train-the-Trainer meeting into the agenda of the project. Secondly, the selection of the Train-the-Trainer workshop had to be re-evaluated after this event, one reason being the background of the participants, and the other being their availability and capacities to be involved in the project throughout the whole upcoming year. For this reason, the composition of the trainers from Slovakia differed substantially between the first and second Train-the-Trainer meeting.

Local Derad – Bratislava, April 2016, 18 participants

Date: April 27 - 28, 2016

Location: Štúrová 3, Bratislava

Number of participants: 18

Coordinators: REACH – Research and Education Institute + Cultures Interactive

Local Derad is an integrated approach to professionally deal with the phenomenon of right-wing extremism in youth work, youth welfare and communities. This approach was developed and tested nationwide from 2011 to 2014 as part of a model project by the NGO Cultures Interactive in Germany, in cooperation with social workers and youth clubs. Originally, Local Derad is a qualification course that comprises five modules in a timespan of two days.

Over the course of two days from April 27th to April 28th, 18 representatives of the Slovak NGO community, predominantly from Bratislava and Banská Bystrica, attended the Local Derad training with the purpose of discussing this integrated approach of community oriented prevention work in order to act long term and sustainably against group-focused enmity, hate crime and violence motivated by right-wing extremism. The participants represented a diverse spectrum of NGOs, academia, think tanks and civic education organizations. They familiarized themselves with the intervention plan, which is the central training tool, and learned to apply it according to their working contexts and goals. For this reason, the plan is a substantial part of the EFS training, with useful methodology and various specific exercises which are a very useful inspiration in the context of youth work (cf. <http://www.cultures-interactive.de/en/localderad.html>)

The structure of the training covered both informative as well as interactive segments. First, a short semi-structured discussion among participants took place, followed by a picture game, where participants together and with the help of visuals summarized, in a non-lecture way, the main characteristics of right-wing extremism in Slovakia as well as the most crucial challenges that society is currently facing. Secondly, the CI project on the gender aspect within the issue of right-

wing extremism has been discussed, inciting interest in a topic that is largely under-researched in Slovakia (cf. womex.org). The substantial part of the workshop was dedicated to group work and the testing the specific intervention methods, such as role play or situation analysis by the participants themselves. The Local Derad training thus became a unique opportunity to try the methods used in youth work by youth workers themselves and therefore enables them to improve their reactions in the future.

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Local Derad was organized prior to the scheduled date in July 2016, but since it offered a very good introduction into some of the EFS methods, the project team agreed that it should have been organized much sooner, preferably in the beginning of the project. Local Derad provided an excellent and easily understandable introduction to the general idea behind the Fair Skills methodology, including its origins and principles of field work, and therefore clarified many previous discrepancies about the practical issues related to the methods, mostly stemming from differences in the contexts of Germany as the country of origin and Slovakia as the implementing country. Local Derad offered a particular set of methods that proved to be exceptionally useful and have been often used by participants since, especially the picture game.

Train-the-Trainer II

Date: April 29 - 30, 2016

Location: Co-working Cvernovka, Bratislava

Number of participants: 10 (5 Slovak and 5 Czech)

Coordinators: REACH – Research and Education Institute, Eruditio Publica and Ratolest (Brno) + Cultures Interactive

The decision to conduct a second Train-the-Trainer workshop proved to be a good one, mainly because of the lack of time for proper training and the planning of activities during the previous one, as well as because of the additional time needed to establish the team of Slovak EFS trainers. Just like the first meeting, the second one was also organized jointly with our Czech project partners, this time taking place on April 29th-30th in Bratislava, Slovakia.

In contrast to the first Train-the-Trainer workshop, the composition of participants was slightly different in the second meeting. In addition to two youth workers who also attended the first meeting, three new participants joined the project, representing NGOs and community/youth-focused organizations from both Bratislava and Banská Bystrica . Out of this group, four trainers emerged as the team who prepared, organized and facilitated three youth workshops in Slovakia during the final stage of the EFS project: *Zuzana Szabóová*, representing the Centre for Community Organizing in Banská Bystrica, *Radoslav Sloboda*, representing the civic initiative Not in Our Town! in Banská Bystrica, *Michal Haman*, representing the Centre for European Policy in Bratislava, and

Barbora Bodnárová, representing REACH – Research and Education Institute.

As in the case of the first Train-the-Trainer event, the second workshop also presented an approach of youth-cultural social intervention which combines elements of civic education/ pedagogical anti-bias training, psychologically based open-process group work and peer-learning within youth-cultural activities. However, during the second event, participants had also a chance to experience a DJ/hip-hop sub-cultural workshop firsthand, led by a CI trainer and a DJ. This workshop included hip-hop-related visuals combined with a DJ set as a means to attract youngsters and engage them in the discussion regarding civic education and human rights topics. This demonstration of the EFS method combining civic education with youth cultural work, was an important inspiration for the Slovak EFS trainers, especially considering their background.

The second important topic that was covered during the training and that also gained exceptionally positive feedback from Slovak participants, was the Narrative Approach, presented by our colleagues from Cultures Interactive. The Narrative approach, i.e. a method of exchange with vulnerable youngsters/youth is based on using emotions and self-projection with regard to certain situations – as well as discussions about self-experienced events in a non-debating, narrative manner. CI's We-Amongst-Ourselves group work is organized along the principles of the Narrative Approach. Based on the professional experiences of participants, such a method is often intuitively used in their work, however, it has never been systematically elaborated and explored (cf. CI presentation slides concerning the narrative approach in the report). The session on the Narrative Approach turned out to be one of the most helpful methods for youth workers interacting with young people.

The second Train-the-Trainer workshop provided the Slovak EFS team with sufficient space to plan and consult the plans for the youth workshops that were supposed to be prepared during the final stage of the project. As a result, three events were scheduled:

- An additional „Train-the-Trainer“ youth workshop – in order to dedicate more time to fully adopt and discuss the EFS methods and their adaptability in Slovakia, and to reach out to more NGOs and youth workers in different regions of Slovakia with the aim of including them in the project. The workshop took place in Banská Bystrica in September 2016 (see below).
- A pilot (experimental) hip-hop workshop – considering the time constraints and capacities of the target group, which was consulted in advance, a one-day pilot workshop with young people from Bratislava interested in civic education and hip-hop was organized, in order to test the cross-connection between the hip-hop sub-culture and civic education in Slovakia, as well as to explore the possibilities of creating a “pool of trainers” within this particular youth subculture. The workshop took place in Bratislava in October 2016 (see below).
- A youth cultural workshop at a Slovak high school – prepared by the Slovak EFS trainers and utilizing EFS methods in combination with their own methods of youth work in order to motivate young students on their own to engage in civic action focused on their peers. The workshop took place in February 2017 (see below).

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The second Train-the-Trainer meeting proved to be a good step in order to strengthen the capacity of the EFS training team to conduct and facilitate their own EFS youth workshops. However, the main challenge proved to be the lack of time in order to fully explore the EFS methodology, adopt it to our own specific conditions and to have enough time to reflect before starting with youth cultural workshops focused on vulnerable youth. For this reason, a minor change in the final stage of the project was undertaken – instead of proceeding straight to organizing day-long youth cultural workshops, we decided to add an interphase of discussing the principles of the EFS methodology with a wider audience consisting of NGO (community/youth) workers in different regions in Slovakia, and one particular event focused on testing the hip-hop cultural workshop in practice before starting with the youth cultural workshops for youngsters.

Hip-hop Workshop

Date: October 14, 2016

Location: House of Culture Lúky, Bratislava

Number of participants: 25

Coordinators: REACH – Research and Education Institute

The hip-hop workshop was organized in order to test the youth-cultural training model in practice under Slovak conditions, which in many ways differs from those in Germany. The workshop took place on October 14th in the cultural center Lúky in Petržalka, one of the districts of Bratislava. This place was chosen mainly for symbolic reasons, since it is considered to be the “cradle” of Slovak hip-hop in the 90's. The workshop was led by the Slovak EFS trainer Michal Haman, a civic educator and member of the hip-hop community in Petržalka.

Although originally planned as a workshop based on the “Train-the-Trainer” concept, the concept was partially changed considering the composition of participants who were attracted to the idea of the European Fair Skills youth cultural workshop concept. Its original aim was to target youth workers from Bratislava and its surrounding areas who would be interested to see how hip-hop and DJs could be used as a part of civic education. The resulting group was, however, consisting almost predominantly of young hip-hop artists from Petržalka, i.e. young people who are not really interested or trained in the field of civic education, but who at the same time have some impact on youngsters via their music and awareness raising about political facts. This makes them a very specific target group with a significant potential for youth work.

The one-day event consisted of two main parts. After a series of “ice-breakers” and introductory games, the first part of the workshop was comprised of a session focusing on the methods of conducting civic education via hip-hop-related topics such as famous artists, songs or albums from both the Slovak and international music scene. Considering the composition of

participants who themselves are significantly knowledgeable about hip-hop history and the meaning of the songs, the discussion as well as the interconnections with the topic of civic education became even more interesting. Following this session, the second part covered an even more important topic, namely the opportunities that young artists have in approaching young people and delivering important messages to them. The end of the workshop was dedicated to the youth cultural part of the EFS workshops, i.e. a competition to build a DJ controller, the school of scratch and a hip-hop battle. At the end of the day, participants performed some of their songs during a concert on the premises of the cultural center, which was open to the public and thus had an immediate local dissemination effect

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Just like in the case of the previous workshop in Banská Bystrica, the original aim of this workshop was to use the “Train-the-Trainer principle” in order to further the transfer of the EFS methodology to youth workers in Bratislava, and to prepare a model workshop to show the possibilities of incorporating elements of youth culture into civic education. As a result of the composition of participants, the goal of the workshop was pushed even more forward and allowed us to test the methods on people who are really interested in both civic education topics and youth culture. Using these means, both trainers and participants gained valuable expertise and motivation, both of which they will put to good use during future youth workshops.

Round Table II

Date: November 28, 2016

Location: Hotel SET, Bratislava

Number of participants: 20

Coordinators: REACH – Research and Education Institute

The final Round Table of the EFS workshop took place on November 28th on the premises of the Hotel SET in Bratislava and was attended by approximately 20 representatives of different segments of the nongovernmental as well as the governmental sector. Among them were representatives of NGOs from Bratislava as well as Banská Bystrica, youth centers, research centers, universities and also ministries. Its aim was to follow up on the first Round Table that took place one year before and for the first time introduced the idea of European Fair Skills to the representatives of the community. The second Round Table aimed at summarizing the results and outline future follow-ups of the activities.

The Round Table was divided into two parts. While in the first part basic findings, conclusions and experiences from the “European Fair Skills” project were presented by project coordinators, the second part was dealing with experiences and practices of exit practitioners from Germany and their potential in the context of Slovakia.

In the first part, the discussion emphasized several crucial challenges that the Slovak EFS team had to face in the Slovak society. First, one of the main priorities for Slovak communities regarding the prevention of polarization and group hatred remains the necessity to support a stronger sense of “common identity”, due to the fact that the constant fragmentation and “us vs. them” mentality is observable in the Slovak society. This is also accompanied to a great extent by the necessity to find the right language of communication with political opponents which would prevent further radicalization.

Prevention remains an important and persistent challenge as well. The participants agreed that many strategies and approaches of prevention and civic education are only immediate and rushed reactions to what is happening politically, while the aspect of prevention remains insufficiently systematic and lacks methodological soundness and sustainability. This is, however, a rather long-term challenge which requires a change in approach in the education and youth work sector as well as a different and innovative sort of awareness-rising and public debate.

The third important point of the discussion is also very relevant with regard to the second part of the workshop and related to the necessity of including the whole family, community and also municipality in educational and awareness-raising strategies. Schools have a constant effect on the opinions, perceptions and social skills of children, and therefore need to be taken into the account, if the impact of preventive work is to be of a long-term nature and sustainable. Moreover, it might be useful to look closer at successful mobilization strategies of right-wing extremist groups, analyze them and draw specific conclusions from them. This would also mean more focus on small and often politically overlooked communities in rural areas, including the transgenerational aspect and making an investment in local activities and the municipal authorities of these communities.

The second part of the Round Table focused on the so called EXIT facilitation programs and methodologies. EXIT work strategies are built on the assumption that the most common reasons for entering the violent extremist movement are related to the need of disenfranchised young people to find recognition/respect, a strong sense of belonging and affiliation with others and meaning of life, but also space for self-realization and self-expression (which might be in some cases accompanied also by factors of chronic stress in the family and by transgenerational effects stemming from the WWII legacy in the family). Actual working methods of EXIT practitioners contain responses to such situations, and were presented during the roundtable by representatives of two EXIT organizations from Germany, Stefan Sass and Sebastian Jende, representing the German Association of EXIT Facilitation Practitioners.

Based on their long-term experiences, the crucial condition for success is identifying a minimum of personal motivation and commitment with each client, even if this falls short of any explicit determination to exit the violent extremist movement. If such an element is not present, EXIT practitioners do not continue with the process (for further conditions and principles see the RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice in Exit and Prevent Work that was developed during CI’s chairing of the RAN Derad group; <http://www.cultures-interactive.de/de/fachartikel.html>). The

assessment of success of an exit process is subsequently dependent on three criteria: (1) the rupture of all contacts with the violent extremist scene; (2) the rejection of the ideology and (3) no further criminal activity. Based on the experiences from Germany, the ideology can be one of the trickiest aspects of the process and at the same time also one of the most common reasons of unsuccessful exits. However, if ideological change comes late or doesn't come around fully, any other processes of distancing oneself from violent extremist behavior is appreciated as a positive partial development.

As the discussion already suggested, several lessons learned are important for Slovakia, as they define basic recommendations for possible future EXIT projects in the Slovak context:

- EXIT as a network of social services. It is crucial to at first develop a multi-agency network of external contacts that might be useful for the diverse requirements related to individual cases of exit processes (i.e. psychotherapy, job consultancy, tattoo removal, etc.), but also a network of multipliers. Based on German experiences, only a small percentage of potential clients is targeted via passive communication channels (such as websites or social media). A substantially more important step is the development of a network of schools, youth organizations, social workers or municipalities, i.e. those who are most likely to come into a direct contact with potential clients of exit work. It is therefore necessary to educate them about what to do and who to contact as well as to raise awareness about options which they can draw from if necessary.
- Addressing "social dependencies". It is necessary to develop a complex approach which would prevent a mere replacement of one social dependency (the extremist milieu) by a different one (e.g. the EXIT organization). Given the social and psychological nature of the challenge, it is necessary for social workers to stay in the position of assistants or mentors during the process of dealing with bureaucracy or job search. Such an external network of support should have the ambition to lead to the client developing an independent self in social life.
- Subcultures and youth cultures can be the way. Individually, subcultures and youth cultures might be a solution in terms of providing viable alternatives with regard the above mentioned feelings of belonging, solidarity and means of self-expression.
- The role of "formers" in EXIT programs. One of the most crucial and controversial questions discussed, was whether and how to work with formers and their life stories in the process of deradicalization/disengagement and prevention. The debate on this topic is still ongoing – on the one hand, such life stories can serve as a positive example for others; they are certainly worthwhile to be known by the wider public and thus are a veritable issue for journalism. On the other hand, the direct pedagogical mentoring process seems to be the most important element which, and cannot be replaced by a video testimonial.

This topic of the roundtable and exit facilitation exchange also had a particularly productive effect on our colleagues from Germany, particularly with regard to the ongoing debate about methodological standards of exit work and about whether or not to work with formers.

Concretely, a first paper draft on this issue was produced by the EFS team from Berlin and became part of the EFS report as an unforeseen consequence. This paper will be further discussed and developed within the German Association of Exit Facilitation Practitioners and after the end of this process published in the context of defining good practice in exit work.

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

Remarkably, coinciding with the EFS project, the development of exit facilitation structures and personnel has been undertaken in Slovakia both independently and in liaison with the EFS project – and will be further pursued in the immediate future. Thus, the Round Table was organized according to the plan, with the added aspect of discussions about the EXIT program as one of the possible follow-ups to the EFS initiative. As EXIT strategies appear to be a very topical issue in Slovakia right now, the Round Table stimulated expert discussions on this issue which will continue during the upcoming months.

Youth Cultural Workshop

Date: February 27 – March 2, 2017

Location: Gymnasium of Jur Hronec, Bratislava

Number of participants: 20 students in the working group, 150 students in the final gathering

Coordinators: REACH – Research and Education Institute, Centre for Community Organizing

The final EFS event in Slovakia took place at the end of February 2017 at a high school in Bratislava and its main aim was to raise the interest of students with regard to the topics of prejudice, stereotypes and the problem of building of barriers between different groups of people - between “us” and “them”. Moreover, it also aimed to promote the development of critical thinking and reasoning as well as to create space for advancing narrative exchange and individual leadership skills. The four-day long workshop, which also served as a pilot project for future action with the possibility of being replicated at other high schools across Slovakia, was led by EFS trainers Zuzana Szaboová and Barbora Bodnárová. It combined several goals:

- d) raising awareness and giving information to students about specific topics related to the development of prejudice and stereotypes and their effect on social cohesion and the political system of the state through interactive lectures and discussions with experts from the field;
- e) presentations of existing, mostly local and not widely known pro-social initiatives and experiences of engaged people in the field with the goal to raise awareness about activities of the non-governmental sector with special attention devoted to features that can inspire those who attend in their own civic engagement;

- f) development of leadership skills and reasoning/interaction skills using EFS methods of informal education, i.e. connecting civic education with youth cultures and using it to spread important messages in a way that is more fun and approachable for young people;
- g) using the unique opportunity to screen a documentary about the work with Roma children from poor families living in Roma settlements all over Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and to discuss this topic with the author of the initiative, Ida Kellarova, and some members of her group. The presentation and discussion about the film rounded up the four-day workshop.

The workshop lasted four days and was divided into two phases. The key part – the screening of the documentary and performance by Ida Kellarova and her choir was open to all students of the high school. Beforehand, a three-day workshop for a selected group of approximately 20 students took place. They were motivated to not only educate themselves in the area of prejudices and stereotypes and how to prevent them, but they also had a chance to develop their own micro project. This way, they had the opportunity to try out their new knowledge and abilities directly in their own community, which will result in a multiplication effect.

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The workshop was designed to combine the EFS approach with the strengthened element of leading participants not only to reflect on the most challenging issues of the current society, but also to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to develop their own “micro projects” that could contribute to a change in their community. The biggest advantage of such initiatives developed by young people for their peers is the multiplication effect that is reached by guiding youngsters to become aware of the problems and showing them a variety of approaches to deal with them. This alternation of EFS workshops proved to be a good strategy, especially considering the feedback of the participants. According to them, the activities of the EFS methodology motivated them to think about the challenges related to prejudices and stereotypes in different and more broader terms, and also to reflect on different points of view of the problem. They were also significantly motivated by the three micro projects that were developed during the meeting, all of them focused on younger students attending their own school. These projects will be further elaborated under the guidance of Slovak EFS trainers in the following weeks and implemented until the end of June 2017.

UNPLANNED / ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**Train-the-Trainer Workshop****Date: September 30 – October 2, 2016****Location: Sport Bar, Banská Bystrica****Number of participants: 25****Coordinators: REACH – Research and Education Institute + Not in Our Town!**

This Train-the-Trainer workshop represents an added interphase between learning the methodology and its implementation. Given the great deal of time necessary to fully convey and comprehend the complex EFS methods as well as the necessity to discuss them in a wider circle and confront them with practical experiences by youth workers from different Slovak regions, we decided to prepare one more workshop using the “train-the-trainer” principle, this time with Slovak EFS trainers as lecturers instead of representatives from CI. The workshop was led by Zuzana Szabóová and Radoslav Sloboda, both civic educators and activists from Banská Bystrica, with Michal Haman coordinating the sub-cultural sessions.

The workshop took place on September 30th – October 2nd in Banská Bystrica, central Slovakia, and was attended by approximately 25 NGO representatives from different regions (but affiliated with organizations based predominantly in Bratislava or Banská Bystrica). Banská Bystrica was selected as the site for the workshop for several reasons. First, its location in central Slovakia makes it easier to access from other regions, compared to Bratislava. Secondly, our close partner organization (the parent organization of two Slovak EFS trainers trained within this project) is located in this town. Last but not least, the choice has a symbolic meaning as well. Banská Bystrica is currently infamous for being the first region in Slovakia to elect a right-wing extremist politician to the position of Chairman of the region, as well as the region with the highest public support for a right-wing extremist party. Participants, again, were selected in order to represent a diverse spectrum of community and youth workers from Slovakia.

The workshop lasted for three days and consisted of three parts. The first part was the introduction of the European Fair Skills approach and the principle of interconnecting civic education and youth cultures as a means for establishing dialogue with youngsters. The main objective was to inspire youth workers to implement parts of the methods in their own work and to engage in more interactive methods of youth work, using their language and preferred means of spending time and using this strategy as an advantage in communicating civic educational topics to them. Secondly, more detailed attention was dedicated to certain specific methods that proved to be most helpful for the work of youth workers in Slovakia. Similarly, just like during the previous event, the Narrative approach received the strongest response from participants, it being a systematically elaborated method that they intuitively used but had not had the chance to analyze and discuss until now. Thirdly, participants were also given the chance to experience the EFS

workshop themselves, as one session was devoted specifically to working with the camera, pictures and video, and their applicability in the civic education process.

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

As mentioned above, this concept of organizing a youth cultural workshop was not planned originally; however, it best reflects and responds to the current Slovak situation. One of the biggest challenges in creating the Slovak EFS training team was to approach youth workers. Even though the idea behind the project and the training principles were very convincing and helpful in the current political and civic situation, the youth and social work sector is heavily understaffed and undersized, plus it faces constant and serious financial instability. In reaction to that, it proved to be in some cases difficult for their parent organizations to release social workers for longer periods of time to be engaged in other projects, such as the long-term EFS initiative. We decided to face this challenge by engaging these colleagues in a rather short-term but more comprehensive way of cooperation, i.e. a three-day workshop, where the EFS methods were adjusted to their experiences and expertise, which would then provide us with even better tailored methods to work with during the final part of the EFS project.

Workshop by Nova Generácia / New Generation

Date: May 8, 2016

Location: Hotel SET, Bratislava

Number of participants: 20

Coordinators: New Generation (led and facilitated by representative of REACH – Research and Education Institute and Slovak EFS trainers)

Following the Local Derad and Train-the-Trainer II, two Slovak EFS trainers were invited to lead and facilitate a one-day event organized by New Generation, a youth organization formerly associated with a political party and currently an independent NGO with youth work as one of their main areas of focus. The Workshop took place on May 8th on the premises of Hotel SET in Bratislava and was attended by approximately 20 high school students representing all Slovak regions, who were interested to acquire new inspirations and methods for communicating with their peers who already adopted or are at risk of adopting radical ideas. The participants received basic information concerning right-wing extremism in Slovakia, discussed their perceptions and opinions on the current situation and challenges, and were engaged in a role play where they had the chance to try talking to their imaginary radical schoolmates.

IUVENTA Conference on Extremism in the Slovak Republic**Date: June 16 - 17, 2016****Location: Austria Trend Hotel, Bratislava****Number of participants: 150****Coordinators: IUVENTA Slovakia (with representatives of Cultures Interactive and the REACH Institute attending the panel discussion and a Slovak EFS trainer leading one of the workshops)**

On June 16th – 17th, IUVENTA Slovakia, the country's largest youth organization, organized a nationwide conference of NGO representatives and youth and social workers as a reaction to the results of the parliamentary elections in March 2016. Upon the invitation by IUVENTA, Radka Vicenová, the Slovak coordinator of the EFS project, attended a panel discussion on the current challenges in terms of increasing support for violent extremist thinking and behavior; and Radoslav Sloboda, one of the Slovak EFS trainers, led a workshop on successful initiatives with regard to combating these dangerous trends. In addition to this, Harald Weilnböck of Cultures Interactive delivered a keynote speech and was also invited to a meeting with the President of the Slovak Republic, where he introduced the main ideas of the joint cooperation of EFS partners as well as a concept for a presidential youth work initiative on a national scale.

Center of Community Organizing project meeting**Date: November 11, 2016****Location: Banská Bystrica****Number of participants: 5****Coordinators: REACH Institute + Center for Community Organizing**

One of the most important project outcomes is the establishment of a partnership between the REACH Research and Education Institute, the coordinating institution for the Slovak part of the project, and the Center for Community Organizing in Banská Bystrica. Following the involvement of representatives of the Center in all important events of the project and the fact that two members from the Slovak team of trainers have a background there, a more in-depth and systematic cooperation was established between the two institutions. For this reason, several EFS project and coordination meetings took place in Bratislava or Banská Bystrica, mostly concerning issues of the project implementation as well as further sustainability of the EFS initiative. One of the results of this cooperation will be the systematic elaboration of the EFS methodology in combination with other training methods and its broader implementation in the high schools of other regions of Slovakia. Furthermore, fund applications for additional work nationally and internationally will be launched (cf. "Thoughts and Recommendations on PVE for President Kiska").

TARGET GROUPS / PARTICIPANTS**Feedback by Participants**

Given the diversity of events and implementation activities organized within the EFS framework as well as the number of participants, their profile along with their expectations and subsequent evaluations and feedback substantially differs from case to case. (for general feedback and conclusions from all EFS partners see “Overarching conclusions from European Fair Skills’ transfer of good practice – in view of further work in preventing group hatred/ violent extremism in Central and Eastern Europe.”; cf. unforeseen products).

- **TRAINERS.** Although the overall number of participants that attended Train-the-Trainer I and II was 10, the final number of trained Slovak EFS trainers, armed with EFS tools and able to lead and facilitate an EFS workshop, is four. This final number was influenced by the ability of the participants to be involved in the long-term project outside their organization for the necessary extent of time, as well as the suitability of their backgrounds considering the purpose and aims of the EFS project. In any event, the general feedback from all Train-the-Trainer participants was positive, appreciating the innovativeness of the EFS approach via youth subculture. Moreover, due to the fact that all trainers already had substantial experiences with many different methods of youth work, the resulting youth workshops were not only a mere copy of the CI workshops, but carefully transformed to reflect the unique aspects of the Slovak society and combined with other interesting and successful methods of youth work. Apart from the element of youth cultures and different ways of using youth cultures in order to deliver civic education messages to young people, the narrative approach (presenting the principles according to which the CI We-Amongst-Ourselves group work is also done), was many times mentioned as one of the biggest benefits of the EFS training methodology.
- **FIRST-LINE PRACTITIONERS, YOUTH AND SOCIAL WORKERS.** One of the biggest challenges of the EFS project was to get to the target group of youth and social workers and to engage them to a larger extent into the project, for two main reasons. Firstly, the sector of youth workers is generally quite undersized and the number of youth clubs (in a sense that was anticipated by European Fair Skills based on the German experiences) was very limited. A small number of such youth clubs was located in the capital, but the success rate of finding suitable youth clubs was substantially lower in smaller cities. Secondly, in the youth clubs that were found and identified, the availability of youth and social workers was fairly limited, mainly due to the fact that they are understaffed. For this reason it is unrealistic to expect the long-term involvement of their workers, most of which are needed for everyday work in their organization, to attend numerous other trainings. Nevertheless, the interest in the EFS approach that was detected within this target group was substantial and even though their ability to participate throughout the whole EFS process was very limited,

representatives of all relevant organizations from this group attended at least one event during the implementation period, particularly Local Derad, the hip-hop workshop or one of the Train-the-Trainer events. Just like in case of the previously mentioned group of trainers, the biggest success and interest within the broader group of youth and social workers was generated by the lecture about the Narrative approach, being the most helpful and important tool in their every-day work.

- **RESEARCHERS, ACTIVISTS, NGO WORKERS – STAKEHOLDERS IN GENERAL.** The broadest target group included, in addition to youth and social workers, other NGO representatives, researchers, university professors and government officials. This target group was present especially during initial and final Round Tables. While the number of attendees during the first Round Table was lower, the discussion was still very helpful for triggering the EFS initiative (taking place before all important events we organized). Also, the number of participants at the final Round Table was higher because of the promotion of the EFS project and therefore increasing the awareness and interest in the project course and outcomes. Given the current political situation in the country, the EFS approach was generally welcomed very positively, which also applied to future plans about the continuation of this initiative.
- **STUDENTS.** The group of 15 students that attended the workshop at of Jur Hronec high school in Bratislava in February 2017, appreciated especially the way how the EFS methods led them to think about the current challenges facing Slovak society in much broader terms and at the same time also to consider many other different views on these sensitive issues. They also expressed great enthusiasm about being motivated to prepare and develop their own initiative of contributing to societal change, which they will also implement in the following months, thus becoming multipliers of the EFS project.

RESULTS / IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

Partial Results of the Specific Activities

Results of the Local Derad and the train-the-trainer meetings.

Both the Local Derad and the train-the-trainer events provided helpful introduction into the systematic and integrated approach of deradicalization work in communities. The core result of the events was the creation of a team of trainers that will be able to organize and lead future EFS workshops and utilize the principles of the EFS methodology in their daily work, which was successfully completed. The team of four trainers with different backgrounds and coming from diverse organizations and regions successfully facilitated three, in many ways diverse events, one targeted at youth and social workers, another at young people active in the youth cultural environment and the third one at students of a high school in Bratislava.

Results of the Round Tables.

The Round Tables provided useful and helpful feedback to the process and outcomes of the EFS implementation in Slovakia. At the same time, considering the focus of the final Round Table, it opened up the topic of deradicalization and disengagement processes as well as so-called EXIT program, which is a relatively new topic in the Slovak Republic. Considering the emerging initiatives and efforts to launch such projects, the visit of EXIT social workers from Germany offered valuable insight into how such processes work and helped to formulate initial strategies and challenges that will have to be overcome. It also helped to identify a potential network of stakeholders that are necessary in the process (also see “Overarching conclusions from European Fair Skills’ transfer of good practice – in view of further work in preventing group hatred/ violent extremism in Central and Eastern Europe.”; cf. unforeseen products).

Overall Results of the Project**Better understanding of the situation and opportunities to compare countries.**

The first and most important result that should be mentioned, it being a precondition for the success of the project in general, is a better and more in-depth understanding of the situation in all participating countries. Although working in the same geographical region and sharing many similarities considering social, economic or political aspects, each one of the countries involved faces different specific challenges which caused also rather different outcomes with regard to the implemented EFS methodology. Two years of working together as well as mutual study visits ensured a detailed and comprehensive exchange and insight into the everyday work between partners. (Also see “Overarching conclusions from European Fair Skills’ transfer of good practice – in view of further work in preventing group hatred/ violent extremism in Central and Eastern Europe.”; cf. unforeseen products, by EFS team Berlin).

Adjustment of the EFS methodology.

In addition to the rich exchange with other EFS project partners in the process of learning and adapting the methodology, and thanks to the team of Slovak EFS trainers that was created during the process of implementation, we were also able to combine the EFS principles with other successful methods and thus alter the practices of CI in order to adjust them better to the Slovak environment. This included the civic education techniques and knowledge of the history of the Slovak hip-hop scene (and its interconnection with the development of democracy in the Slovak Republic) that were brought to the project by Michal Haman, one of the Slovak EFS trainers. Moreover, it was also the input of the trainers from Banská Bystrica and representatives of the local community organization Center for Community Organizing and its platform “Not in Our Town!” that was crucial and beneficial in order to achieve the overall objectives of the project. Thanks to their experiences with educational workshops focused on prejudices and the concept of “Living libraries”, which were combined with the youth cultural workshops developed by CI, the

foundations of a new comprehensive and innovative methodology were laid and tested, and will continue to be developed in the upcoming months. The “Living Libraries” methodology is based on the primary contact between youth and representatives from minorities who are brought into the discussion in order to act as “live books”, where young participants can read and learn new information about ethnic, national, religious or sexual minorities that are often the targets of discrimination in the Slovak society. Since it is highly probable that young people have the biggest prejudices against those minorities that they do not have any contact with, the hypothesis is that the mediation of this primary contact will help to change the perceptions about the minority and destroy some of the most widespread stereotypes in society.

Established and strengthened network of stakeholders in Slovakia.

The concept of the EFS methodology proved to be interesting for many stakeholders in the field of prevention and combatting extremism and radicalization in Slovakia, including the governmental and nongovernmental sectors, mainly thanks to the innovativeness of the approach of establishing dialogue with youngsters via subcultures. EFS Round Tables offered a space for networking and exchange of experiences between various actors from different fields, all of them offering their own expertise and presenting the variety of educational and training activities in the fields of deradicalization and depolarization implemented in Slovakia recently. Such networking events are particularly important for enhancing the cooperation across the nongovernmental sector and launching a systematic approach for deradicalization activities. Moreover, the process of establishing a team of Slovak EFS trainers also resulted in a deeper cooperation between the organizations involved, that will also extend to other areas of the operation.

Established and strengthened network of stakeholders among participating CEE countries (Germany-Czech Republic-Slovakia-Hungary).

Last but not least, the EFS project strengthened and deepened the cooperation between the four participating neighboring countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Although the organizations were already partially networked thanks to the Radicalization Awareness Network, a more systematic cooperation and experience/knowledge exchange did not occur until the start of the European Fair Skills project. Building upon positive experiences and assets that resulted from the mutual cooperation, we believe that further follow-ups of these activities are only a matter of time. The planned future activities by the EFS network will also include Polish partners – additionally, large parts of the EFS team were present at a recent RAN study visit to Bulgaria in Jan. 2017 and were also invited to the RAN Exit Academy, conducted in Berlin in Feb. 2017.

Evaluation and Comparison to the Original Objectives

The number and structure of events that were organized.

Two significant changes occurred. First, due to the need for more time and space to

exchange and discuss the transfer of the EFS methodology during the first Train-the-Trainer meeting in September 2015 and requests by project coordinators and local trainers to dedicate more time to learn about particular methods and experience them personally themselves, a second Train-the-Trainer meeting was added, although not originally planned. Secondly, for a similar reason, more time was necessary in order to adjust the acquired methods and to identify all stakeholders that might get involved in the process, including regional nongovernmental partner organizations and, most importantly, youth and social workers. For this reason, instead of one several-day long youth cultural workshop organized at the end of the project, a different approach was chosen. In order to reinforce the training element and expand the network of youth workers who could contribute to the process of the transfer of the methodology and subsequently also use its elements in their daily work, one more train-the-trainer workshop was organized before the youth cultural workshops took place. The first event contained mixed aspects of Train-the-Trainer I, II and Local Derad, while the second one was more narrowly focused on young local hip-hop artists with the potential to reach youngsters via their music. As the last event of the project, a four-day long workshop at a high school in Bratislava was organized, which combined the acquired methods of European Fair Skills and the youth cultural workshops with activities inspiring and guiding young people to take action and come up with an initiative aimed at their peers., i.e. to ensure the multiplier effect of the project.

Methodology was implemented successfully, although in slightly altered version.

As mentioned above, the EFS methods and activities of the Slovak workshops were adjusted and supplemented by other good practices that the Slovak EFS trainers used in their work. Most significantly, the element of motivating and empowering young people to take action in their own surroundings was reinforced. In addition to the civic education part, students were led to plan and organize a small initiative aimed at their peers (i.e. in their classroom or local community) and were guided to lead the initiative to a successful end. Moreover, the concept of “Living libraries” was used during the final youth cultural workshop, i.e. the method the Center for Community Organizing uses in their work which is based on the concept of fighting prejudices via first contact with representatives from marginalized minorities.

Different compositions of the Local Derad and Train-the-Trainer groups.

Due to many obstacles and difficulties, as described above in more detail, the share of youth and social workers was lower than anticipated – compared to the number of civic educators who were in the majority. Nevertheless, this did not influence the quality of the results and outcomes of the project, on the contrary. It contributed to a more diverse group of trainers, each with a different background (e.g. civic educators, youth workers, young artists, etc.) and thus also to more diverse activities that were included in the youth workshops. One advantage of this was that civic educators are generally much more in need of methods like the narrative approach compared to social workers who often apply forms of it intuitively anyway.

A new partner in the project.

Although not originally predicted, the Center for Community Organizing became involved in the project to a significantly larger extent than originally planned and is currently engaged in a more formal cooperation with the REACH Institute, the coordinating organization. Representatives of the center started as trainers and are currently part of the coordinating team that is working on ensuring the sustainability of the project and future activities during which EFS methods will be developed further. REACH will thus be more able to become active in projects which focus on the actual practice in the social field and thus combine policy analysis and practical research.

IMPLEMENTATION**Difficulties****ORGANIZATIONAL**

The first of the project proved to be complicated to a certain extent, mostly due to the several changes at the level of project coordinator and the subsequent change of the participating organization (from the original project partner, the Center for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA) to the current partner organization, REACH – Research and Education Institute). However, the second half of the project, during which the most crucial parts of the project were implemented, was carried out without any further changes or turbulences with regard coordination.

NETWORKING

One of the challenges was to create the team of EFS trainers, which proved to be a slightly time-consuming process due to the longer time needed to fully understand and learn about the EFS method, and also to find trainers with a suitable profile who are also available for being included in a long-term cooperation. This challenge was successfully overcome. Similarly, the already mentioned problem of establishing a team consisting of social workers was also a significant challenge that the coordination team had to face. For this reason, civic educators were in the majority, with youth cultural trainers/young artists balancing them out.

PREPARATORY AND IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

After the conclusion of the project it is safe to conclude that the preparatory phase of the project was supposed to last longer and be more comprehensive and, most importantly, more attention should have been given to the prior exchange of details regarding good practices between partners and introductory EFS seminars for local coordinators. Considering the structure of the events that were planned, the implementation process showed that the Local Derad training

should have been organized as the very first event, laying the foundations of further EFS trainings by introducing the basic principles of the method, after which the Train-the-Trainer meetings should have followed. Also, visiting actual youth workshops organized by Cultures Interactive in Germany by local EFS coordinators would have been helpful in conveying a more accurate picture of the trainings themselves. Such an approach would also help local partner organizations to better and quicker understand the overall EFS method and mobilize national networks in a more accurate and faster way.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Last but not least, one of the biggest challenges the project faced was at the same time its biggest advantage – the difference in contexts and the nature of challenges that the participating countries are facing. When comparing Germany and Slovakia, the nature of the problem is slightly different. While Cultures Interactive works primarily with youth at risk of being involved in violent extremist movements via engaging them in other youth cultural activities, in Slovakia the problem is rather complex and the radicalization of public opinion is a much more serious issue, with young people being a particularly vulnerable group. This, naturally, requires a slightly different approach in some way. The opening discussion with young people and supporting the development of critical thinking should be a bigger priority. However, delivering the topics of civic education via topics of youth subculture proved to be very efficient and productive approach.

Positive Aspects

NETWORK OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD OF DERADICALIZATION

Thanks to the attractiveness and innovativeness of the EFS approach via youth subcultures, during the two years of the implementation of the project the number of involved organizations increased. This includes first and foremost the organizations affiliated with the Slovak EFS trainers trained during the EFS project, but later also a much wider network of governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations operating in Slovakia. The strengthening of the interorganizational cooperation is crucial, especially for the purpose of future joint action and strategy formulation, as well as further exchange of experiences on the national level and the dissemination of EFS methods. The fact that the number of people interested to be involved in EFS workshops is still increasing, is positive and of particular importance. This can lead to a potentially higher number of EFS trainers and also cooperating organizations in the future.

STRONG TEAM OF LOCAL TRAINERS AND COORDINATION

Despite the initial changes to the team of trainers, the composition of the final group of trainers proved to be very successful. All four trainers have extensive and diverse experience in working with youth, which ensured the high quality of the youth cultural workshops conducted at the end of the project.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology, adapted from CI and adjusted according to the requirements of the target groups in Slovakia, was tested during the youth cultural workshop at the end of the project and will be tested further during the upcoming months as well as at a number of schools in other regions of the country. The results of these tests will be summarized in the form of a written manual.

Sustainability

First of all, the final workshop at the high school in Bratislava was a pilot event which will be replicated also on high schools of different type and in different locations, funded by other sources.

Secondly, the abovementioned cooperation established between the REACH Institute and the Center for Community Organizing in Banská Bystrica ensures the continuation of the educational workshops using the EFS methods in following months.

Moreover, the final Round Table discussion on EXIT projects stimulated a joint initiative of a group of researchers and youth workers with the aim to launch similar deradicalization and disengagement projects in Slovakia, where such programs are completely missing.

Last but not least, the EFS trainings were attended by a significant number of participants, some of whom are gradually becoming regular parts of the team, with the potential of more to follow. Our ambition is to keep the network alive and involve more trainers in the process, including youth cultural workers and prospective students.

REACH – Research and Education Institute

About us

The REACH Research and Education Institute is a newly established independent non-governmental organization based in Bratislava, Slovakia, focusing on issues of extremism, radicalization of public opinion and the formulation of deradicalization strategies.

The REACH Research and Education Institute is a common project founded by a group of young, motivated researchers and analysts with wide experience from academia and the non-governmental sector. We share a vision of creating a “bridge” between academia and research institutions, providing knowledge and methodology on the one hand, and the civil society and policy-makers, i.e. the actors that operate in the field on the other. With extensive experience from various organizational frameworks and fields of research, we are dedicated to strengthen the quality of professional discourse in Slovakia and address the most challenging issues through a proper methodological and evaluation-based approach. Our mission includes the establishment of a well-respected “think-and-do tank”, operating in close partnership with a wide range of stakeholders in the Slovak society in order to formulate the best quality responses to the challenges our society faces today.

Our mission

The main aims of the REACH Institute are:

- to strengthen the democratization of political institutions with focus on social issues;
- to strengthen the evidence and research based approach and its utilization in addressing the most challenging issues of society;
- to strengthen the cross-sectoral cooperation and relations between research institutions, academia, civil society (especially the grass-root practitioners) and policy-makers;
- to contribute to the development of solutions and responses to major intrasocietal challenges in the Slovak Republic.

Our topics

The main research topics of the REACH Research and Education Institute include:

- intercultural and intrasocietal relations in the Slovak society;
- radicalization of public opinion and formulation of counter-extremist strategies;
- research of growing support for right-wing extremist ideas and movements;
- nationalism and minorities;
- education policies;
- media and the objectivity of media outlets.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Project Coordinator:

Cultures Interactive is a Berlin-based NGO that was founded in 2005 and works nationwide and internationally on various projects and networks. CI develops and implements strategies and methods which enable effective work in the field of preventing phenomena of group focused hate, right-wing extremist and inhuman attitudes amongst youth. Additionally, the organization offers further education / trainings for pedagogues and multipliers working with youth within a community as well as counseling and coaching of communities.

Slovak Project Partner:

Center for Community Organizing (CKO) is a non-governmental organization that has carried on its programs in Slovakia since 1999. The organization is guided by a small staff of trained organizers and professionals based in central Slovakia – in the city of Banská Bystrica. CKO provides assistance to ordinary citizens to better ensure that they become a part of the decision making of local governments. CKO wants to contribute to changing Slovak society into a society of active citizens in which the "voice of the people" is asked for and respected. The organization has helped citizens enter public life by listening to the issues in their communities, and teaching them how to create strategies and act to bring about necessary changes in their communities. More recently, CKO has been focusing on working with minorities to ensure their voices and requests are being heard. In 2014, CKO helped to establish the Not In Our Town (NIOT) platform as a response to the election of a local neo-Nazi to head the regional government. Together with leaders from different segments (municipality, business, NGO's, universities) NIOT is fighting against extremism and radicalization in the region of Banská Bystrica by organizing public discussions and implementing a systematic and professional agenda supporting tolerance, anti-discrimination and basic human rights.

Ratolest Brno, z.s. is a non-profit, non-governmental organization providing services for children, youth and families. Its mission is to help socially disadvantaged children, young people and families resolve their adverse life situations, or prevent such circumstances. By offering equal opportunities to its clients, the organization aims at improving their quality of life as well as successfully (re)integrating them into society. Ratolest Brno gives children a chance to grow up in functional families and supports young people who veered off course. Professional care to children and young people mostly growing up in dysfunctional families is provided for free. Furthermore, Ratolest Brno plays an important role in the strategical and methodical area of social services in the region and on the national level.

The Kontiki vocational training Ltd. (limited company) is a public benefit non-profit organization located in Budapest, Hungary. Kontiki Ltd. runs a private second chance type of vocational education school with about 300 15-25 years old students, dealing with special educational needs

and drop-outs. Their work aims at supporting these students to re-enter society and the school system by providing alternative forms of education and widening their horizons with various sensibilisation activities as well as national and international projects. The school staff consists of various professions, based on the belief of the organization that people from different professional backgrounds complement and inspire each other and create extra value. Among the founders and co-workers are teachers, special education teachers, developmental teachers, social specialists, economists, information specialists, jurists, environmentalists, anthropologists, psychologists, artists, mediators, mental health experts, supervisors, office leaders, administrators, teachers of vocational training, engineers, acrobats, communication experts, guidance experts, animators and documentary film makers. Some are more focused on the work with adolescents, others are working with adults and the families of the adolescents.