



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road

ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

within the framework of the European project *STRIPS ON THE INTEGRATION ROAD*

A Coruña, September 15, 2016

Asociación Cultural Integra

INTRODUCCION

The present document is an analysis of the focus group's activity carried out by Asociación Cultural Integra in A Coruña, dated September 15 2016, within the framework of the European project with title *STRIPS on the Integration Road* with reference number 2016-1-SE02-KA205-001475.

The analysis has considered the opinions of six participants coming from associations related to interculturality and migrant's rights. Their profiles are reflected in the chart inserted below, stating their age, gender, activity and the NGO to which they belong.

PARTICIPANTS	AGE	GENDER	ACTIVITY	NGO
Participant P1	35	Female	Worker- Social trainer	SOS Racismo
Participant P2	34	Female	Volunteer - Social worker (unemployed)	SOS Racismo
Participant P3	33	Female	Worker - Social trainer	Teranga Juan Soñador
Participant P4	35	Female	Worker - Psychologist	ACCEM
Participant P5	27	Female	Worker - Social worker	ACCEM
Participant P6	23	Female	Volunteer- Secretary (unemployed)	X

The analysis takes account of eight questions as follows:



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road



- Question 1: What are the comics for you?
- Question 2: What is your favourite comic?
- Question 3: What kind of comics does fit better the project?
- Question 4: What type of characters?
- Question 5: What about the setting?
- Question 6: What would be the most relevant points to be dealt with?
- Question 7: How to overcome the language barrier?
- Question 8: Is there anything else you would like to add?

ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

QUESTION NUMBER 1 & 2

WHAT ARE THE COMICS FOR YOU?

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE COMIC?

Comics are associated with humour and entertainment for all the participants in the focus group. The most popular comics mentioned during the activity were *Mafalda*, *Zipi y Zape* and *13, Rue del Percebe*, being written all of them by Spanish authors. However, there is a difference between the book of *Zipi Zape* (addressed to kids) and *Mafalda* (adult's target group), as the second one denounces the social situation of the country. Some participants stressed they love comics with a political and social background, while other recognised they not enjoy reading comics at all.

QUESTION NUMBER 3 & 4

WHAT KIND OF COMIC DOES BETTER FIT THE PROJECT?

WHAT TYPE OF CHARACTERS?

Half of the participants seemed to opt for superheroes, while the other half preferred to choose antiheroes. The common idea is that adolescents should identify themselves with the main characters of the comic, and that both genders must be represented.



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road



QUESTION NUMBER 5

WHICH WOULD BE THE BEST SETTING?

The setting should be at local level because it increases the chances of feeling identified with the environment. Apart from that, it would be interesting set the comic in different spaces. It means that each strip should be placed in a different space to address diverse daily-life situations. It could be the school/ high-school, a park, a store, a work-placement, the neighbourhood, public entities, etc. Therefore, each strip will be set in a particular environment characterised by a particular type of relationship. For instance, the park will be focused on friendship's topics.

"I think it could be interesting to mention different spaces in the strips. It means, each strips should be place in a different space to treat a particular daily situations. It could be the school, the park, the work placement, the neighbourhood..." (P6)

QUESTION NUMBER SIX

WHICH ARE THE CRUCIAL ISSUES TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE COMIC?

Relevant and diverse ideas has arisen during the activity of the focus group, and it has been possible identify some crucial points to be addressed in the comic. The comic, as viewed in the project, seek for the social integration of the young immigrants and refugees by improving their knowledge of the heritage, habits and language of Sweden, Italy and Spain. However, all the participants pointed out the comic should take a bidirectional perspective and not be only addressed to the newcomers, but also to the society as a whole. That means the comic should let all collectives learn about each other in order to reach its objective and foster intercultural communities.

The first important conclusion is that gender equality must be reflected in the comic's strips, as a way to show the commitment of the STRIPS' team and the European Union Commission with the equal rights principles.

The adaptation to a new environment needs to be seen as a gradual process, but it should never be approached as a problem. The inclusion must be bidirectional in order to success,



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road



since both parts (the newcomers and the autochthonous) have to be involved in all the different steps. They also praised the goal of the comic as another tool to be used for schools and young centres fighting for social inclusion.

The first idea that participants brought to the table was the importance of humanising people coming from diverse religion, ethnic or cultural background in order to confer them dignity. It would be interesting to show refugees and immigrants as mothers, fathers, daughters, etc. with the same life's expectations, fears, problems and happiness than any other person with a European citizenship. In this way, it will be possible the identification between people from different communities like human beings, instead differentiated realities with no common aspects.

"The inclusion needs to be bidirectional. There is no need of highlighting the differences. We should be focused on the similarities... The comic should be focused on the relationships between people. Also, about the importance of time and space for each culture" (P2)

"We are all human beings. Parents, mothers, grand-mothers...We are not as different as they want us to believe" (P1)

"It would be good that the topics (of the comic) were those specially interesting for adolescents...and those related to behaviour codes, cultural codes, that make easier the understanding of the new context. Sometimes, the misunderstandings are due because the newcomers are unaware of the new reality. The strips should show how to deal with everyday situations in different contexts" (P6)

STRIP'S IDEA

Being aware of the importance of sharing traditions and values, it came up the anecdote of one participant. Her partner came from Senegal and he is a Muslim prayer. Her grand-mother is a catholic practicant. One day were both together at home talking about religion and both realised they have the same kind of rosary beads for praying, called "tasbih" in Arabic. Also, they repeated constantly the same sentences over and over.

Other example of mutual practices was given by other participant. In Christmas time, the workers of the NGO invited their users to take dinner with them to celebrate the 24 December. The users, for their part, invited the workers to their homes to celebrate the "Eid-el-Kabir" (the Lamb Festival)



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road



Another important topic to be treated is the cultural codes. Understanding cultural and behaviour codes are essential to facilitate the dialogue, avoid misunderstandings and cope with new contexts. The strips could cover how to react in a job interview or have to behaviour on the table as well. Having in mind that idea, the issues should be related to adolescents' big concerns. Furthermore, time and space are complex concepts that also should be explained.

Other topic is the concept of identity, which lead participants to an interesting debate. It can be said that each person has multiple identities or one complex identity. In any case, each person might be, for instance, a woman, mother, worker, left-wing, traveller, etc. according to her context. To deny this plurality of identities to the migrant communities and label them with one unique characteristic have the purpose of making them homogeneous and, therefore, more complicate the process of inclusion. On the other hand, the participants highlighted the importance of being teenager as an identity with more points in common than differences.

"Identity is a way of seeing life. There are diverse identities. For instance, feminism, trade unionism; not only nationalities. I mean, we are several identities at the same time" (P1)

"Our identity is complex, diverse. Depending on the context we find ourselves, we emphasises one characteristic or another one. Moreover, identity is not immutable, it is changing over time" (P6)

STRIP'S IDEA

It could explain the difference between a person with an immigrant background and a person with a refugee one. Always considering that social inclusion plans need to be addressed to both collectives.

Another opinion, that might not be relevant for the comic but that got great support among the participants, was the role of the local government. In particular, how the local Administration joined the "Refugees Welcome" campaign by declaring A Coruña as a host city. However, for the participants, it was not a real willing to go forward and implement a viable plan. The mentioned debate was followed by the importance of the Government when it is time to regularise the administrative situation of immigrants and refugees. In this case, however, the target public are adolescents so the issues they need to face are not much linked



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road



with public institutions. Only potential students of vocational training centres under 18 years old would need to cope with the law and the required documentation.

One interesting topic was related to the term of homogeneity and how different communities see each other as a monolithic block. This conception is very visible when it is talked about the Muslim community, since it is considered a group with no aim for developing or with no interest in Human Rights.

"It is believed that foreign societies are more homogeneous than us. It is though that all Muslim people are the same, that want to keep their culture at all costs, as an homogeneous block" (P2)

"Conflict is not inherent...It is a matter of will. There is a need of will, active communication and intercultural awareness for all parts" (P2)

STRIP'S IDEA

Keeping in mind the idea of homogeneity, one participant explained a situation during the focus group that could be incorporated as a strip: a 12 years old girl, coming from Guinea, could not distinguish her classmates during the first 3 months as all of them looked very similar to her. It is said to happen us the same, for instance, with the Chinese community.

Other idea of interest was the estrangement that an immigrant/refugee can feel when s/he arrives to a new environment: other country, school, friends...so it is also responsibility of the society makes them feel welcome. Another point is the importance of not basing our thoughts on false assumptions, as the solution should be an active communication among all parts.

STRIP'S IDEA

A Strip's idea related to this topic could be the drawing of three houses and three persons inside each house, doing similar things. It means, things that everyone could be do in their own homes such as cooking, reading, talking by phone, etc. Close to the picture, just a question: "Guess which the Syrian's house?" Or "Try to find the seven differences"(It was going to be impossible identifying the Syrian person. No differences are going to be highlighted)



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road



QUESTION NUMBER 7

HOW TO OVERCOME THE LANGUAGE BARRIER?

All the participants agreed that the first months of the arrival, for those that do not speak neither Spanish nor Galician, are complicated. At the beginning, the young immigrant/refugee has some trouble following the lessons at school, reading the books or even understanding what is asked in an exam. It depends also on the newcomer's behaviour or personality. In general, if they are registered in the educational system, they do massive progress in a short period of time.

The last idea about language barrier is the possibility of translating the comic into different languages. In Spain, it may be Arabic, French, Russian, Wolof and Portuguese, as they are the biggest communities of immigrants living in Galicia. It would be highly recommended to translate the document into Galician language as well, as it is the official language and used as much as the Spanish one.

STRIP'S IDEA

One cartoon can represent a teacher asks the question: "What would you bring to your first date?" One student means to say "a box of chocolates" but he is saying in reality "a box of a gas bottle". In Spanish language, "chocolates" and "gas bottle" are very similar ("bombones" and "bombonas" respectively), so it is easy to get confused when the language is not well spoken.

This cartoon also could have a poster in the wall/door with a message written in a foreign language.

QUESTION NUMBER 8

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

Some participants were aware of the importance of accompanying the comic with a guide as a support to be distributed at schools. Furthermore, they empathised how positive it would be



Erasmus+

STRIPS
on the integration road



to get some feedback for potential users and interculturality experts, a sort of testing proof, before the final distribution of the comic.