

Forumul Cetatenesc pentru Actiune Sociala si Educatie Civica (FCASEC), Romania and Evergreen Center for Sustainable Development, Beijing

Report on EU-China NGO Twinning program

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The discrimination of the Roma who are widely considered unable to integrate into Romanian society is a huge problem in Romania. Especially children suffer from unequal chances of access at school or when entering work life. Similarly, a large number of children whose parents are migrant workers do not enjoy the same opportunities as their peers with urban hukou in Chinese cities. FCASEC and the Evergreen Center therefore exchanged on ideas and methods on how to integrate socially disadvantaged young people into society through environmental projects.

Georgeta Mureanu, FCASEC

I visited the Evergreen Center for Sustainable development in Beijing between September 6th and October 10th 2015.

Aims of the exchange

The main purpose of the exchange was to share good practices of using environmental education methods for the social inclusion of people with fewer opportunities. Thus, the exchange focused on the share of non formal education methods and other methods specific to the environmental field and how their use can lead to social inclusion of migrant or ethnic disadvantaged groups.

Activities

- training of Evergreen staff and volunteers about non formal education methods from environment field and their impact in the process of social inclusion of fewer opportunities young people: forum theatre and photovoice, energizers and dynamic games.
- direct activities with children from community centres, using team building and group dynamic activities (activities in 3 community centres managed by Evergreen organization)
- preparation of a forum theatre play about an environmental problem that is met in the Chinese society and the performance of the play in community – finding solutions by the members of the community
- preparation of a photo voice exhibition by members of the community, on environmental issues met in Beijing or in general, in China

Training of Trainers

As the main topic of my twinning exchange focused on the use of non formal education methods specific to the environmental education for the social inclusion of the marginalized

groups, I have proposed to my host organization – Evergreen, to deliver a training of non formal education methods that can be used for the social inclusion of the migrants groups the organization is working with, in the community centres.

The methods proposed were photo voice and forum theatre. In this regard, we planned a training on these methods for the staff and volunteers of the organization. The training was attended by 10 resource persons from the organization. First we have started with some games to know each other, to learn the names and as well to know each other little bit, thing important as we should enjoy spending the time together and at the end, be able, as team, to realize a forum theatre performance and a photo voice exhibition.

After the introductory games, I have presented the photo voice methods: how they can be used, outcomes expected. After getting familiar with the methods, everybody agreed that it would be best to use this method with a group of beneficiaries of the community centre, kids with age 10-12 years, who, by themselves, to realize a photo voice exhibition about the environmental problems faced in their community.

In the second part of the day, the training was dedicated to the forum theatre. First, the concept was introduced: the characters that are played in a forum theatre play, building of the scenario. Split in teams, the trainees had start to prepare 2 forum theatre plays, about the indifference of citizens to environmental problems

We concluded the day with a short feedback exercise. Everybody had to say to his/her right colleague what they appreciate about him/ her.

Forum Theatre in the Community Center

After the Training Of Trainers in Forum theatre with the staff of Evergreen, we had prepared a play which to be performed in front of the kids and parents from the community of Hutong XiSiBeiSanTiao).

The Evergreen team was present in the centre, rehearsing our play. The theatre play prepared had as topic the presence of garbage everywhere and the peoples' indifference regarding this issue. The public was formed mainly by children enrolled in the activities of the centre but also some parents and members of the community.

In front of that wonderful public, it was not easy to control the emotions. Especially since it was my first experience as joker for a forum theatre performance played in Chinese, a thing that made me be little bit stressed. But thank Evergreen for have such wonderful staff, able to help anytime. Chinese was not a problem anymore as one person of Evergreen staff had translated for me.

If at the beginning my biggest fear was that the public would not be too active, when starting the forum part, I was surprised to see that all the kids wanted to present a solution. We adapted the method to their age and the results were over my expectations.

As youth workers, these kind of activities are part of my work. I have played forum theatre more times, with different groups of actors, different topics and different public but I consider that for me, this play brought me the biggest satisfaction!

Theatre in the park

On September 18th we had continued our training about the use of environmental non formal methods used for the social inclusion of the marginalized groups. We continued our training about forum theatre but the place chosen for this was little non formal: we took the opportunity of a nice weather and we made our training in park. Thus, the visitors of the park could see us rehearsing but also making some exercises for actors in order to help them understand more the mechanisms of forum theatre but also to help them perform.

Sometimes the visitors of the park stopped to see what we are doing and see how our play is finishing!

Achievements of the exchange

Apart from the transfer of methods and knowledge, this fellowship exchange brought a plus of image for the involved organizations. Thus, our organizations became more known on local, national and international level and more reliable both for potential companies and institutions which might finance their activities - but also for the members of the communities, who are now more interested to be involved in the activities of the organizations.

Another plus for the organizations consisted in the transfer of methods and good practices and thus extension of the area of action of the two organizations.

Outlook on future cooperation

For the future, FCASEC is interested in establishing new partnerships with NGOs working on a similar topic. In this moment, FCASEC is implementing activities in the environmental field in partnership with European NGOs, by European Voluntary Service. For the future, FCASEC is interested to expand the network with NGOs from other continents as well.

Li Fangfang, Evergreen Center for Sustainable Development

I visited the Forumul Cetatenesc pentru Actiune Sociala si Educatie Civica in Romania from 10th October to 31st October 2015, and afterwards also went to Germany in order to visit the NGOs DUH (Deutsche Umwelthilfe) and NABU (Naturschutzbund Deutschland, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union).

Main activities and products of the exchange

In Romania, we organized several activities with migrant children and volunteers related to environment protection. In Germany, I visited and worked with environmental NGOs to learn how they do environmental education with children.

Activities with kids in Romania

Together with other volunteers, we organized several activities with kids in kindergartens, where they showed different kinds of methods to communicate with little kids to me: playing games, drawing picture, coloring photos, singing songs. They also showed me how to get in contact with the kids even though they speak a different language. It was a good experience for me. We will have better understanding with each other if you show your sincerity and enthusiasm, especially when we communicate with children.

Activities on environment protection in schools with migrant children

The schools **FCASEC** cooperates with have lessons about environmental protection work every week for migrant people. I worked with them mainly on the topic of recycling. They designed a game to teach the children how to separate the rubbish into different kinds. Then they use a competition game to examine whether they have remembered what they learned.

The children are very interested in this topic. In my eyes it is a good way to cooperate with schools regarding environmental protection work.

Volunteer training and intercultural evening

The Forumul Cetatenesc pentru Actiune Sociala si Educatie Civica is participating in another program of the European Union named EVS (European Voluntary Service). Therefore, they have a large number of volunteers from the entire world every year. In order to help them adapt to the live and volunteer work in Romania, they design volunteer trainings for the youngsters.

After an ice breaker game, the workshop focused on the EVS project and the roles of the volunteers. They used games and storytelling to show this. All of the activities are designed in an interactive way. It made the volunteers think about the intention of the EVS, about what they should do in their projects, the potential problems they will meet in the future, what responsibilities they have. This will help them have a deeper understanding of the volunteer program and build the teamwork.

The volunteers are from different countries. They use a different language, have different traditional food, and have their own special culture. The cultural evening aimed at introducing the volunteers' countries of origin to their peers. Each volunteer held a short presentation about their respective country, including national emblems, famous people, history, and special clothes and food. Then we shared the food we cooked by ourselves with each other. This was a way to promote the integration of volunteers in different countries.

Working with volunteers

During my stay in Romania, I spent a lot of time with the volunteers. I took part in the preparation of the conclusion report with the volunteers and they introduced me to their teamwork. I also went to the village museum with them and found out how they cooperate with the local museum. It was the first time to see a village museum. I think it is also a good way to cooperate with other organizations to share volunteers, resources, activities, and so on.

In Germany

After my stay in Romania, I went to Germany in order to visit projects of the NGOs DUH (Deutsche Umwelthilfe) and NABU (Naturschutzbund Deutschland, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union).

River otter protection activity

In Erfurt, I prepared a river otter protection activity with DUH where we showed the river otter to primary school students. What are the main problems with the river otter? What do we have to do protect them?

We used plasticine to model river otters, and furnished shoeboxes into a "habitat" of the river otters. The students used the plasticine and collected branches to create a suitable habitat to the river otter after they learned about it from the animal museum. They discussed what environments the otters like most and made use of their own hands.

DUH also cooperates with communities and companies to improve the situation of the otters' live. Research shows that the otters die from car accidents because they do not want to swim under bridges, but instead will walk through the street when they meet a bridge. To improve this situation, the animal activists have built a little bridge especially for the river otters, and they have found evidence that the otter are indeed using the little bridge. It

seemed very useful work to me. This work not only protects the river otters from the car accident but also expands the protection concept to the ordinary people.

Visit to NABU and NAJU

NABU is the largest environmental NGO in Germany. It was a good opportunity to visit the office. Their work includes many different topics, such as bird protection, mammal protection and air pollution. In all of these topics they also rely on children ecology education. I also visit the office of NAJU. Their activities and guidebooks for teachers I found well designed and they seemed very attractive and kid friendly. The books are designed for different topic, such forest, wetland, desert, grassland, and so on.

Conclusion

It was a very good opportunity for me and my organization to take part in this exchange program. I have seen a lot of work in different areas of different organizations and I have learnt a lot from them. I think there will be more opportunities for cooperation with European NGOs in the future. The exchange program is laying first steps for future joint projects, especially because you get to know potential cooperation partners on a personal level.