



# PASS

Influence on **p**ersonal **a**ccess  
to education for people  
with migrant background

A Sokrates, Grundtvig 2 project

## Table of Contents

Preface .....	3
The basic matter of PASS project .....	4
The partners .....	5 – 11
Co-operative Speha Fresia .....	5
Assoziacione Interculturale Griot .....	6
Hydra International Project & Consultancy Co. ....	6
The FBI Centre .....	6
Haus der Begegnung .....	6
Mykolas Romeris University .....	6
Volkshochschule für die Stadt und den Kreis Leer e.V. ....	6
Bergische Volkshochschule Solingen Wuppertal .....	6
Impressions and some results of the first year PASS meetings .....	12 – 19
Leer .....	12
Innsbruck .....	13
Presentation of similar EU projects .....	14 – 16
Rome .....	16
Forum Theatre .....	16
What migrant interview partners recounted – some impressions .....	17 – 19

# PREFACE

In autumn 2005, staff members of five organisations from Italy, Austria and Germany met in Innsbruck for a preparatory visit. They exchanged their ideas about a project to explore the access of people with a migrant background to the education systems of their countries. From the start they agreed on a bottom-up approach – to ask the people concerned about their experiences and thoughts; to regard them as experts of their requirements. To this meeting a migrant woman from Kenya had been invited to provide feedback on the project ideas and one of her conclusions was: “It is their talents that have to be found.”

After this meeting, two more organisations from Turkey and Lithuania were approached to join the team and the application for the PASS project was created: PASS – Influence on personal access to education for people with migrant background.

By now we are looking back on one year of cooperation. We met in Leer/Germany, Innsbruck/Austria and Rome/Italy. We discussed our assumptions and took into account the migrant experience of project partners. We developed our qualitative research methodology and interviewed

people with a migrant background. We invited the Malta Drama Centre to give us an input on how to disseminate and share interview results creatively; how to bring to life our findings in an ongoing exchange with people with a migrant background.

Now, after listening to migrants' life stories and comparing some baselines of their accounts, we are convinced that integration is a bi-directional process. We all live in one world and it helps all of us to be able to enjoy life, to appreciate each other and to learn from each other. The interviews prove that it is necessary to take people's experience seriously, to understand what people want, what they know, what they feel. That helps to find their educational needs. We conclude that informal education is inseparably linked to formal education and often is the basis of it.

**Let's take it further, following the path of Coesistenza in a multiversal world!**

Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer, Institut FBI, Innsbruck



PASS partners in Rome



PASS partners in Innsbruck



PASS partners in Innsbruck



PASS partners in Leer



# THE PASS PARTNERS

## SPEHA FRESIA, ROME, ITALY



Speha Fresia has been working since 1983 in the field of training, research and consultancy in the framework of local development combined with adult education provision and an entrepreneurial spirit (guidance and counselling). These experiences are complemented by research activities, mainly about territorial socio-economic conditions, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, social responsibility, quality, innovation and integration of vocational/educational systems, social care and support for disadvantaged groups, gender issues. Since 2003, Speha Fresia conforms to the quality management systems standard UNI EN ISO 9001:2000 in terms of continuous and lifelong learning training activities, provision of job counselling services and services for local development, design of systemic measures in support of the weak, social research services. The involvement in integrated actions is a priority, as well as integrated partnerships, working both with public institutions, at municipal and regional level, and with private companies or third sector organisations.

Nowadays we are involved at local level in a "system project" in the field of social services for the 10th Municipality of Rome which has amongst its priorities the inclusion of migrants and low-skills people. The transnational experience started in 1996 with a NOW project (an initiative for women entrepreneurs) and continues to date with three equality initiatives: on the employability of disadvantaged people in the Campania region, on the third sector improvement in the region of Sicily and on the social inclusion of a specific target group, a national project dedicated to separated children (young migrant children without parents or relatives). The PASS experience represents an important bridge from the process of recognition and evaluation of competences, through the narrative approach of oral history methods, to the design of specific paths and tools to motivate people with a migrant background to attend education and training opportunities and to be actively involved in the life of the communities.

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## VOLKSHOCHSCHULE FÜR DIE STADT UND DEN KREIS LEER E.V. – VHS, LEER, GERMANY



The Volkshochschule Leer is an NGO founded in 1945 with the focus on a broad adult education. It is one of the thousand adult education centres of the German Adult Education Association. The VHS is a public lifelong learning centre offering a wide range of provision, from vocational skills and further training, to a second chance to acquire school-leaving and other qualifications, to courses with political and cultural themes, and leisure courses.

We are offering special courses for people with a migrant background. This concerns language courses, political and social issues and also an intercultural course for an open target group.

In the context of the PASS Learning Partnership, we are able to involve a lot of different learners (people with or without a migrant background, disabled people, women/men who are involved in intercultural or gender issues) and

are also able to discuss and disseminate the results of the Partnership very easily to other adult education centres in Germany or in Europe due to our network of EAEA or the German Adult Education Association.

The VHS Leer is located in a very rural area and has an open border to The Netherlands. Therefore, it can build up direct contacts to Dutch organisations and has a range of target groups in the area of the Ems-Dollard-Region.



*Volkshochschule Leer*

Heike Pilk, Maike Eyhusen, Hrud Eysteinsdottir  
<http://www.vhs-leer.de/>

## BERGISCHE VOLKSHOCHSCHULE SOLINGEN WUPPERTAL, WUPPERTAL, GERMANY



"Zweckverband Bergische Volkshochschule" – is a fusion of two Volkshochschulen, Solingen and Wuppertal. We are Education Centres open to the public. The main objectives of the department of further education are advice, individual training and integration in the vocational training system or in the initial training market for different target groups: e.g. young adults (age 15-25) at risk of social marginalisation, people with a migrant background, the unemployed, women and people over 50. The development of our training concepts is based on a holistic and individual approach and adheres strictly to the method of self-organised

learning. A current project deals with "blended learning" as a method for competence transfer for employed people in small or medium-sized enterprises. We are networking at local, regional and national level.

"Bergische Volkshochschule" was involved in various EU projects: GI Employment, AGIR 2000 (Employment Community Initiative Programme), Sokrates Grundtvig II Learning partnerships "Lifelong Learning" and "Diversity Management".

Martina Kissing  
<http://www.bergische-vhs.de>

# IMPRESSIONS AND SOME RESULTS

## OF THE FIRST YEAR PASS MEETINGS

### FIRST MEETING IN LEER, EUROPAHAUS AURICH, GERMANY DECEMBER 7<sup>th</sup> TO 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006

The first meeting of the PASS Learning Partnership group took place in Leer – a small city in the very North of Germany, in the region of East Frisia.

The main issues were to get to know each other; a preliminary presentation of the settings in which the partners work with migrants; to clarify the expectations and common aims in national and mixed working groups; to agree on working methods, responsibilities, partnership guidelines, time tables. In addition to what we formulated in the project application we agreed that we want:

- To find a balance among formal, non-formal and informal education and knowledge;
- To focus on the role of trainers with migrant background as good models of integration (peer educators/mentors);

- To focus not only on language and national laws but also on culture, daily life and habits, religion, ethnic values (unwritten rules);
- To address the lack of standardisation in the educational system: curricula, assessment and evaluation, assessment of non-formal education knowledge and skills;
- To bring illegal migrants into the focus too;
- To ask how migrants can be supported with regard to their self-confidence and self-awareness.

At a meeting with the mayor of Leer, Wolfgang Kellner, and a journalist from a local paper, the PASS project was introduced to the East Frisian public.



Results of introduction session



Result of working session



Sight on the City of Leer



Meeting with the mayor of Leer



PASS partner in front of VHS Leer

## SECOND MEETING IN INNSBRUCK, EDUCATION CENTRE HAUS DER BEGEGNUNG FEBRUARY 15<sup>th</sup> TO 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007

In Innsbruck the biographical method to get information and migrants' life-stories, focusing on education experiences, was made more concrete; interviewing skills were trained with the support of guests with a migrant background.



*Migration landscape of PASS partners*

### SOME BASIC REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERVIEW METHOD FOR THE PASS PROJECT: THE THEME-CENTRED ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Doing research with interviews means experiencing a situation with people. Extracting hypotheses or theories from this kind of empirical research means reflecting on and interpreting information given by the interview partner. But it also means reflecting on and interpreting the whole context of the interview and oneself. The biographical method as we understand it in our project context implies:

- Every human deserves to be appreciated for what he/she is (not necessarily for what he/she does),
- It is part of the human condition to be able to keep on learning and developing,
- We encourage and promote certain behaviours by the way we create – educational, political, familial, economic – structures (e.g. responsible or irresponsible behaviour can be promoted),

- Our attitude towards people should be guided by empathy, selective authenticity and appreciation.

For the PASS project, we listen to people's oral history in a two-phase interview: we combine an open phase designed to encourage the interview partner to recount their experience following their own logic with an interview focused on a theme. For the theme-centred part we developed a questionnaire. Interview method and questionnaire were tried after the Innsbruck meeting and should be further discussed and adapted in an ongoing process in the course of the PASS project. In the context of the PASS project, we are working with a biographical approach to find out what sense people themselves make of their life experience. What did they learn about gaining helpful knowledge on staying and living in the receiving society? What kind of knowledge do they need at all? Which strategies proved appropriate? What has helped them? What barriers did they have to face? And again: What knowledge, which strategies have helped them to overcome barriers?

Which of their bits of knowledge, behavioural habits, thinking structures were helpful for them and which impeded them:

- as a woman/as a man
- as being born and raised in a certain region of the world
- in a certain social class
- in a certain family
- as being raised in a certain way
- as possibly following a religious belief
- as being an individual with a unique experience
- as having gone through and experienced different situations, countries, cultures, classes, education, ...









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## WHAT MIGRANT INTERVIEW PARTNERS RECOUNTED – SOME IMPRESSIONS

On comparing their own migration experiences as well as professional and personal experiences of people with a migration background among the PASS partners, it became clear from the first meeting that education biographies, enhancing factors and obstacles become more understandable within the context of life stories. We therefore integrated questions on family structures, motivation for the migration, socio-economic conditions, cultural identity and personal competences into the guidelines for the second phase of interviews. The interviews supported our method of understanding people's concrete education paths in terms of their biographies.

### WOMAN FROM IRAN, 44, IN GERMANY

"When we fled, I cried on the plane for the entire journey and thought only of my mother, whom we had had to leave behind on her own. She is the most important thing in my life and I did not know if we would see her again alive."

"I no longer have any family in Iran, only my husband's family still lives there and it is hard for him not to know if he will ever see his mother again. He could not attend his father's funeral, because he had fled before. Such things are very painful and will stay with us forever."

### WOMAN FROM LATVIA, 43, IN LITHUANIA

"When I got married, and my husband and I decided to live in Lithuania, I

did not consider living in a neighboring country to be a major change. Those were the Soviet Union times, and there was no much difference if you lived in one or another republic. Maybe I did not consider it properly.

When Lithuania passed the Law on Citizenship, I lived here and was granted Lithuanian citizenship, like many others, who were registered [had a permanent address of residence – LK] in Lithuania. But after a few years an official from the Migration Department called me and explained that I have the right to citizenship, but not under the regular order, but under the Decree of the President, as an immigrant from Russia who has married a Lithuanian citizen. That is why I should submit the passport I had and apply for the citizenship again. That meant heaps of papers, the national language test, living without any identity documents for a while, and uncertainty to an extent. It was only then that I started to think what it meant to have the citizenship of a country or not to have it; what it meant to a person who might be denied the citizenship. Having treated citizenship as a natural thing, all of a sudden I felt threat to my security, I lost confidence in the state institutions, I felt helpless and realized how vulnerable a migrant can be."

### WOMAN FROM CAMERUN, 30, IN ITALY

"Our home was of wood, with three sleeping rooms, two of them for all the children divided by sex. My older sister got three children, the father did not recognise them, and the little ones also lived in my family, without problems



teacher made a big effort. As I said, I was in my third school-year, I had to recover a lot of lost ground, from scratch, yes, so that I got the recommendation for the gymnasium in the fifth year in school. So this really was an experience of success. And everybody helped, all class-mates helped."

### **TURKISH WOMEN, 51, MIGRATED FROM EASTERN ANATOLIA TO ANKARA**

"Until my husband passed away, I was like a closed box. We migrated to Ankara from my village 34 years ago, but I remained locked inside the house. After his death, I had to work, which is where I learned civilisation. I could not continue to go to literacy school, where my first boss had sent me, because I was working so hard. However, I could manage to learn reading and little bit of writing from my children.

Ankara, a huge city that I was afraid of so much at first, is now smaller to me because I feel like a bird. I can read now, which means I can take a bus, I understand where it goes, and then I can go wherever I want..."

"In our village, women are like goods. They can be purchased or sold. Actually, they are not different from cattle. But urban women are different. The most important thing is education. You can be the master of your destination. Thus, my biggest success is being able to send my children to school."

## **LEGAL NOTICE**

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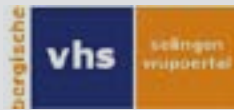


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Drawing of  
Mustafa Bilgin,  
5 years,  
3<sup>rd</sup> generation migrant,  
„Clown“