

EUDECU – European Deaf Culture Programme

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Objectives

1. Production of a 'Deaf Culture Programme'
2. Control and improvement of the deaf culture programme through pilot training, and an extra quality control by an external expert
3. Production of a certificate for the deaf participants
4. Analysis of didactic knowledge and methodology
5. Further dissemination of the gained knowledge

The content of the package 'Deaf Culture Programme', was discussed in depth at three conferences. The following subjects were included and developed:

- ◆ The deaf community as a cultural and a language minority
- ◆ Deaf awareness
- ◆ Deaf pride
- ◆ Participation
- ◆ Identity
- ◆ Interpreter awareness
- ◆ Sign language

These themes were deepened and developed through a closer examination. As the Danish deaf community can appeal to a rich cultural evolution, the Danish delegation played a guiding as well as a leading role regarding the content of the programme. During the three conferences, the other partners had the chance to discuss the issues that Denmark proposed to explore.

This package was tested and evaluated through a pilot training, for which a group of deaf adults volunteered. This was a first control of the deaf culture programme; an extra quality control was made by the external expert Markku Jokinen, internationally acclaimed as an authority on deaf issues. All the deaf participants who attended the meetings, received a certificate, signed by Asger Bergmann (DE), Markku Jokinen (FIN) and Dirk De Witte (B).

The deaf delegates presented the package on their turn to another group of deaf participants, each in their own country. During these home-based training sessions, every country could stress these issues that seemed the most relevant to them, depending on their specific situation.

During the course of the project, it became clear that the analysis of didactic knowledge and methodology

required a more in depth research. The second pilot training session in the different countries, brought to light that there did not exist a clear-cut didactic approach. Due to the lack of research, most partner countries did not know how to transfer their gained knowledge to other deaf persons. The further dissemination of the gained knowledge was in the first place achieved due to the small-scale group of international deaf delegates, who in their turn presented it to another deaf audience at home. Secondly, there was made a manual, containing a summary of the package 'Deaf Culture Programme'. This was translated in English, and divided among all partners. These partners can distribute it further on local grounds.

Unintended / Unexpected Outcomes / Problems Encountered

All partners entered this project with different backgrounds : Denmark at the one end of the scale and Romania at the other. This had as a consequence that the input of Denmark came across as rather overwhelming, in the positive sense of the word. An enormous amount of information triggered discussion and gave a better insight into the different national situations. A pleasant side effect of these varying backgrounds was that, while discussing the several major topics from the package, other important information could be exchanged. The different backgrounds of the partners brought about, at the other hand, that there was sometimes no common ground as point of departure. Therefore, the divergences between the countries as far as knowledge of, and experience in studying deaf matters was sometimes enormous.

Another result of the good contacts during the meetings, was the initiative of the Belgian organization Fevlado to support the Romanian ANS financially by donating money for a photocopier.

One major, but target group related problem, was the rather difficult daily communication. In between the international meetings, direct communication over the phone was not possible because of the participants' deafness, so nearly all communication was based on fax or e-mail. This implied more than once a delay in answer. An ordinary conversation, in which new answers and questions pop up at the very moment, was and still is not possible. Sometimes an interpreter who could speak English was available, but this was more

exception than rule. Communication was also not always that easy with hearing co-workers from other countries, because there usually was not someone present who understood English.

Getting the invoices and necessary documents from the partners on time, also posed major problems. Sometimes it really is a nightmare and it takes continuous efforts to get everything you have asked for.

It was the first time that Flanders co-ordinated a project and it is no job to underestimate. It takes financial accuracy, and a lot of paperwork. A good accountant is absolutely necessary. It is important to have one person within the organization who deals with the content and another who takes care of the figures.

Dissemination Strategy

First of all, the package 'Deaf Language Culture' was introduced to a small-scale group of international deaf delegates, who in their turn presented it to another deaf audience at home. They now use or will use the translated documents within a course. 'Deaf Culture'-workshops will be organized for these people who would like to know more about deaf people's common history and present. Also deaf schools are interested in putting relevant parts of the package on their curriculum. In each country separately the "Deaf Culture Programme" will be further distributed through an active co-operation of the partner organizations and the deaf schools, so as to integrate it in existing curricula.

Secondly, on a more international scale, an English publication of a final manual was edited. 'Cultuur voor Doven' will act as copyright owner, which holds that copies can be ordered at the non-profit organization. We received for this manual already orders from countries all over the world. This manual was distributed by

'Cultuur voor Doven' to all partners, who then took on the responsibility of distributing it on local grounds. Each national organization engages itself in 'advertising' the publication within the boundaries of the own country. On a broader scale, the translations in the several languages will extend the 'outlet' of the document, because of its larger accessibility to the different target groups.

In Belgium, the gained knowledge was disseminated in different ways. Filip Verstraete – who attended as the Belgian deaf delegate the international meeting, and gave the course to the deaf audience in Flanders – assumes there are three major goals of the dissemination:

- ◆ The coaching of teachers of schools for deaf children
- ◆ Subjects on the activity-list of the 'Flemish Deaf Organizations'
- ◆ Lectures for students

There are schools for deaf children (Hasselt, Gentbrugge, Brugge and Berchem), who asked to coach them. By coaching the teachers, a lot of useful information of the package 'Deaf Language Culture' was transferred. These teachers on their turn, use this information in teaching their pupils the Deaf Culture and the Deaf Language.

Every organization for deaf people in Flanders, but also other interested 'hearing' institutions, can now 'book' a lecture. They are held by deaf persons, who attended the deaf course 'Deaf Language Culture'. In this way, the content of the package is disseminated on a broader scale throughout Europe. There are also a lot of universities and highschoools, asking to give a workshop. By giving these lectures, the information of the 'Deaf Language Culture' is transferred to less obvious target groups, such as psychology students. In this way, young professionals have updated information about Deaf Culture.

Project Partners

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