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Handbook

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Part I: Context, facts and lessons learned

Foreword

The **Creative Fem Power** project brought together four partners, from Germany (Sophia::Akademie gGmbH, Düsseldorf), Finland (Teatterimuseo, Helsinki), Italy (Eurocultura, Vicenza) and Slovenia (Društvo DISORA, Maribor).

All the partners joined the **Creative Fem Power** project with previous experience of working with migrants and migrant women as a particularly disadvantaged group with regard to integration. The European Commission recognises that mastering the host country's language and accessing its labour market are two key steps of the integration process for all migrants. Yet due to their multiple roles as mothers, wives and homemakers, migrant women face unique challenges in making these two essential steps. The fact that they often come from traditional societies where female roles are largely predetermined and limited to the household, makes their challenge of integration even greater. Consequently, their chances of learning the host-country language and finding employment are not as good as those of migrant men. This is consistently confirmed by research.

From our educational practice and experience, we can confirm that education and integration of migrant women is a demanding process that presents a specific set of challenges to educators and migrant women alike. As educators and organisations dedicated to educating and helping people, we felt a personal and professional need to address this challenge to the best of our abilities. We decided to use creativity as a medium for communication, education and empowerment because it goes beyond words, language, cultural identity or ideology. It is the most basic common denominator of human expression, available to anyone who is given a chance to discover it within themselves. We developed an idea of a creativity-based curriculum for a series of four workshops that complement each other but can also be used separately if the situation demands it. The workshops aim to discover and affirm the talents and creative potential of migrant women, teach them some useful skills and strategies that will improve their language-learning and job-seeking efforts and, perhaps most importantly, empower them to use their creativity and skills to their full potential.

Through the use of creative methods, we wanted to intensify the dialogue with female migrants to learn more about their life goals and motivations, as well as doubts and fears they have about living in a host-country. In the process we wanted to find and test simple enough creative methods that will enable us and other adult educators to empower them and guide them towards their goals.

Another goal was to encourage and motivate artists to follow our example and use their creative and artistic skills to help migrant women discover and affirm their talents and skills. We believe that learning supported by creative and artistic methods can greatly improve the ability of migrant women for integration and involvement of artists can make the methods even more effective. At

the same time, we wanted to highlight the importance of creativity in the context of integration of migrant women and in the education of disadvantaged groups in general.

And finally, we wanted to use the international nature and reach of our partnership to spread the awareness of the importance of approaching migrant integration in a more coordinated and unified way. This is especially important when talking about migrant women as the story of female migrant integration is also a story about gender equality, human rights and empowerment of mothers as those who are primarily responsible for the upbringing of children and young people.

1 Overview of the project activities

The **Creative Fem Power** project was implemented over a period of 24 months, from March 2021 to the end of February 2023. The partnership consisted of four organisations from Germany, Italy, Finland and Slovenia. The partners differ in size, scope and nature of their activities; still we shared a common desire to explore the possibilities that creativity brings to the ever-important and sometimes formulaic process of migrant integration.

To complete all the project tasks and achieve the desired results, the partners implemented a number of tasks which we shared equally. Here we give a short overview of the main stages and activities to provide the reader with some understanding of the planning, cooperation and work that went into the creation of the project results. They are presented in chronological order.

Research on the needs of migrant women

Although we had a general understanding of the challenges migrant women face after arriving in a host country, we wanted to deepen our understanding and have as complete a picture of the challenges as possible. Each partner tried to describe the needs of migrant women from their perspective, mainly from experience gained working with migrant women in the past as well as from researching various adult education publications and scientific papers. Each partner prepared a summary of their findings that we used as a guideline for the preparation and implementation of future activities.

Preparation of workshop curriculums

While developing the project idea, we decided to develop four separate yet connected workshops. Based on partner experience and skills each partner was assigned with the development of one workshop.

Search for female migrants

Next each partner searched for a group of migrant women willing to take part in the project, namely in the four workshops we designed. This was a different type of challenge for each partner as the number of migrants we had access to varied greatly. We used our professional and sometimes personal contacts to arrange meetings with potential candidates. We presented the goals and activities of the project clearly. Sometimes additional meetings were needed but in the end we all found our participants.

Implementation of the workshops

In each partner country we tested all four workshop curriculums with the previously selected migrant women. We all followed the workshops closely with some minor alterations because of specific circumstances each partner faced with regard to the skills, abilities and the motivations of participating migrant women. The workshops were implemented in a span of several months in the second half of 2022. Each partner adapted the pace and duration of workshop sessions to the quite busy timetables of migrant women who had to attend language classes and other integrational activities while also taking care of their families in accordance with their traditional roles.

Creation of the project results

After we completed the workshops, did the final interviews and collected evaluation information we made a number of improvements to the workshop curriculums. We also created this handbook that you have in front of you now and which shortly describes project results, impacts on all the participants and lessons learned hoping to motivate, inspire and guide future users of Creative Fem Power project results. The handbook also contains a compendium of various artistic methods that were used in the implementation of the workshops and some suggested methods that future users can add to their activities.

The activities above are only the main ones that led to the creation of the project results.

2 Some findings about the situation and needs of migrant women

All partner countries (Italy, Slovenia, Finland and Germany) face migration, although the migrants' countries of origin differ. 80 % of migrants that enter Slovenia come from former Yugoslav countries. In Italy, most of the migrants have their origin in Romania, Albania or Morocco and Germany counts most of its migrants from Syria, followed by Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. The immigrants in Finland mainly originate from Russia, Turkey and Iraq. Even if the countries of origin differ, similarities regarding the situation of female migrants can be found. Germany and Italy registered an increase in the proportion of female migrants (6 % in Germany) and now women make up about half of the migrants in the partner countries.

Still, migrant women are underrepresented in the labour market. In Finland only every second migrant woman is in employment. In Slovenia, only 20 % of migrant women, in contrast to 80 % of male migrants, were employed in some way. In Germany, only about 23 % of female migrants take up employment- compared to 71 % of the German female Citizens. There is a wide range of reasons for this situation.

Most of the time, women are hindered to enter the job market because they have to take care of their kids or other relatives. Italy stated that in contrast to 4% of Italian women, 23 % of the female migrants must take care of their children because easy access to childcare is not available. In addition to that, the differences in the educational systems lead to a devaluation of the degrees. This leads to unused skills and competences. Unfortunately, past work experience is documented insufficiently which makes applying for new jobs more difficult. The lack of language skills is another significant barrier to employment and participation in general. In Germany, less women than men completed an integration course which shows that learning the language and getting to know the culture often falls short for women. Not knowing the language not only makes it difficult to enter the job market but also hinders interaction with natives and building new social relationships.

There are a lot of disadvantages for migrant women which makes integration for them more difficult. But this means that there are also a lot of ways to improve their situation. Possible starting points are employment seeking support, education, health, social belonging and networking, political inclusion, prevention of housing segregation and language skill improvement.

3 Presentation of the project results

In the scope of the project we produced several results to be used by adult educators and others stakeholders involved in the integration of migrant women. Apart from this handbook describing motivations, effects, methods used and lessons learned we also produced curriculums for four thematic workshops: an explorative workshop, a language learning workshop, a job-seeking workshop and an affirmative workshop.

The workshops are described in detail in their dedicated curriculums containing exercises, instructions, envisaged learning outcomes and tips for educators. Here we present a short rationale for each of the four workshops as an introduction and an invitation for you to study them further and use them in your work with migrant women.

Explorative workshop

In this project we wanted to work with female migrants by having talks with theatre-based methods to promote self-esteem, integration and language learning. In principle, there are more factors that unite people from different cultural backgrounds than those which differ. Language teaching can easily be combined with different ways of teaching the performing arts. Our theatre professionals supported, helped and encouraged the migrants to tell their own stories; their voices are heard and they will be seen in society. What kinds of thoughts and feelings do they have? What they would like to say and share? It increased their feeling of self-determination and understanding the new possibilities they have in a new environment. By bringing artistic experience and the migrants' own emotions and memories into their process of learning a foreign language and culture we emphasised inclusion, activism and intercultural dialogue. As we know language is a pathway to culture.

During the workshops we used various kinds of methods like relaxation and improvisation. By acting and making scenes we developed, for example, nonverbal communication, the ways how one can set one's own boundaries or how to consider other people and cooperation skills. Also, we used exercises for finding one's own strengths when practicing job searching situations to improve job opportunities. And, of course, we found out different ways of storytelling, using for example poetry and puppet theatre. We also used theatre costumes to create a character which was maybe totally different from your own character. How did that person think, move, talk and behave? In order to practice the language, all activities took place in Finnish; if necessary, we used sign language or searched for supporting words in English.

Language learning workshop

In our work we often encounter migrant women who interrupt their language learning because they are pregnant or because other family commitments seem more important to them.

Therefore, it seemed important to us to create a workshop that is aimed at female migrants and in which they find the opportunity to pursue their language acquisition with joy and commitment again. Through the creative methods we succeeded in strengthening the motivation in an entertaining way. The idea of participation could also be implemented in this way. We were less concerned with finding new methods for language acquisition than with discovering the variety of possibilities in the new language and establishing a personal connection. Strengthening self-confidence in relation to their own possibilities was also a focus.

Our expectations of increased motivation were ultimately surpassed, as the migrant women involved were fresh and new in their efforts to take further language courses after this workshop.

Job-seeking workshop

For women, having a job is synonymous with independence. For migrant women, it also means more opportunities to expand their social and friendship networks - an important step toward greater integration into the host society.

Unfortunately, however, their job searching is often thwarted by a lack of knowledge of the basic rules of how to look for a job.

From these reflections, the idea of the workshop "Creative tools for job seeking" was born and developed.

Methods such as role-playing, theatre work and music (for the setting and the use of your voice) enabled the participants to learn the principles of communication in a job interview, helped them to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and, finally, to strengthen their self-esteem. Engaging women in activities that involved the use of innovative training methods under the banner of creativity to help them discover-or rediscover-their skills, knowledge, and talents led to results far above our expectations.

Affirmative workshop

As this is the last of the four workshops, we structured it so that it contains and connects all the main ideas of the Creative Fem Power project: creativity, personal empowerment and call to action.

Our goal was to include activities that are meaningful and at the same time simple enough so that anybody can understand and implement them.

The focus is on creative expression and self-affirmation that will, hopefully, lead to greater empowerment and ability to take action.

Creativity is represented by a number of relatively simple activities like writing poems, photography, cooking and knitting. All these activities have a certain feminine sensibility to them and allow anybody to participate and be creative. They also serve as a reminder that creativity has many forms and can be found in a variety of activities.

The affirmative part of the workshop is represented by self-affirmation and creative visualisation activities. They are aimed at allowing migrant women to find a balance between their ideal life scenarios and realistic expectations. These exercises can help the migrants to change their long-term mind-sets to become more driven and successful in achieving their goals.

4 Before the workshops: workshop participants and their expectations

In this section we provide a country-by-country description of migrant women that participated in the workshops, we describe how the recruitment process was done and what played a factor in their decision to participate. We hope this will provide some more context to all who in the future are planning to use our learning materials and help them to plan and implement the activities better.

Finland

We created a collaboration with Laajasalon opisto (Laajasalo institute) where we gathered around 20 migrant women studying Finnish language to participate. Since the participants had significantly different language skills, we formed two groups in A1 and A2 levels of Finnish. This allowed us to test how the activities can be modified to different language levels.

All participants were present at least at two gatherings, but especially participants with small children had difficulties with sickness leave due to covid, day care strikes and Eid, i. e. breaking the fast, which happened during our scheduled meetings.

We had diverse groups in many aspects. We had both refugees and people who had come to Finland because of their relationship etc. Ages varied from 20 to 58, most participants being in their late twenties or early thirties. We had people from Afghanistan, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Iraq, Jordan, Latvia, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Russia, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine. We had women with very different levels of education from different fields, with majority having higher education.

With our group we really encountered the biggest problem in migrating to Finland, which is educated people not being able to get into the workforce because of lacking language skills and the qualifications not matching. One of our participants with two different degrees was told in the Finnish employment office to get a job as a cleaner – instead she started studying for a third degree in Finland in a technical career where it's possible to work in English.

During our last meetings the war in Ukraine had started and that affected especially our Ukrainian participants and our conversations, but with Russian proximity to Finland also the possible safety threats in Finland, where everyone felt so safe just a moment before, even those who had left their home countries due to war or conflict.

Because of Covid, we had problems reaching the women in our target group and had to postpone the beginning from December to January. Many organisations and groups were

working remotely and the groups we visited were small and didn't have any eligible women in them. Most of the migrant population lives in Eastern Helsinki and Teatterimuseo is located in Southern Helsinki, so our location was problematic as well. Through our collaboration partner we were able to function in Eastern Helsinki and reach the groups who were interested in the workshops and ready to learn.

Since we're not a migrant organisation and migrants are only one small part of our customers, the workload to create connections and gather the group was larger than anticipated.

Finland had a peak in Covid numbers in January and restrictions for meetings were strict when we were due to begin. We had to do our first gathering via Zoom and made special arrangements for the other gatherings. Everyone was really excited about the project and thought the day had been fun, but would have been better in person. Everyone was hoping that the week after we could see each other in person and looked forward to it. The participants were really interested both in the curriculum and our museum. They were active in asking for more information or clarifications if they didn't understand some words. Most participants were especially looking forward to our specialty in improvisational exercises.

Germany

A total of 18 women between the ages of 27 and 74 participated in the four workshops. They were women from the following countries: Eritrea, Syria, Ukraine, Nigeria, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Brazil and Egypt.

None of the women had lived in Germany for longer than five years.

Nine of the 18 participants had studied in their home countries but had not yet been able to return to work in Germany in the same profession (or a similar one). The other women had attended school in their home countries for between 7 and 9 years, and not all have a degree.

Among the women participating, three are employed in Germany. The fact that this number is not higher is partly due to the status of the women.

Two of the participants cannot work due to their status. Others are still in the ongoing asylum procedure and are not allowed to take up employment, either.

Eight of the women have already been granted refugee status. Two women also participated who had previously lived in Spain and had acquired Spanish citizenship there, thus becoming EU citizens.

One participant had come to Germany with a visa and one is a German citizen, but never lived here until a few years ago.

All women had approximately the language level B1. Of the 18 participants, only one took part in all four workshops.

At the beginning of the workshops, all the women were thoroughly motivated and had a positive attitude in this regard. Most of the women had never participated in a workshop before and therefore could not imagine much about it. Often, even before the workshop started, the women believed it would help them in any case.

Some women were unsure about the exercises, they were afraid that they would be too difficult. Especially before the first workshop, the women were shy and reserved; not all participants knew each other in advance. This always changed quickly with the first exercises.

For the migrant women it was new to come together with women from other cultures and countries.

Italy

The group participating in the activities implemented by the Italian partner was composed of 8 women aged between 39 and 50, coming from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria.

Looking at their educational background, only one participant had attended high school plus one year of college, one was illiterate, and the others attended school for six to eight years.

All participants have lived in Italy for more than 10 years, they are married and have children of school and preschool age.

Their level of knowledge of Italian is very diverse, although initially we were assured that all had a level between A2 and B1. In reality, even those who know the language better (B1/B2) have many difficulties in writing in Italian, one participant knows very little of the spoken language (A1), but cannot read and write even in her mother tongue, while another speaks Italian at A2 level, but is not able to write in Italian.

Only few have work experience in their home country and only two have had work experience in Italy.

During the initial meetings designed to understand which women were most interested in participating in the activities and their motivation, it became clear that their expectation was to find a job.

As they all still had young children, despite the fact that many of them were no longer very young, they were not interested in recreational or artistic activities, because, in their view, these would only be "a waste of time" and because "*We are mothers, and we don't have time to do children's things*".

Another detail that emerged was that all potential participants were convinced that they knew Italian well enough, while to us trainers it was clear that they did not. Moreover, to

the question *"Do you know how to write in Italian?"* most had answered *"Yes, quite a bit,"* but in fact many of them only knew well enough how to use Google Translator to know how to write even the easiest and most common words.

"I want to get a job" was the refrain from the first meetings, but almost none had any real work experience in Italy or even in their home country. So not only did they lack professional experience, but they also had no idea of the basic rules of the working world, and so, for almost all of them, the idea of work was *"I can only work after taking the children to school and I have to be home in time to prepare their lunch"*, or *"I can be a caregiver for an elderly lady, certainly not for a man, and yet I cannot wash her intimate parts. I mean, I can take her for walks, I can prepare food for her, wash the dishes: things like that"*.

Slovenia

Our group consisted of four constant participants from Iran and Afghanistan.

Participant no. 1, Iranian, aged 37, had a university education. She is the mother of two children, (her daughter is autistic), she is well educated and knowledgeable. She was a women's rights activist in Iran and knows a lot about the topic. In Slovenia she continues to work in the field of migrant women's rights and works in an NGO focussing on migrant women. Her English language skills are good, she is very determined and focused and has good communication skills.

Participant no. 2, also Iranian, aged 49 has an elementary school education. She is the mother of three children and she grew up in a very conservative environment that did not allow women to be educated and independent. She is very affected by her negative experiences in life, but is a very wise person, if a little reserved. She had to overcome some educational obstacles due to stress and was unable to speak any Slovenian at all due to fear before she joined the workshops, but proved to have a very kind and pleasant personality.

Participant no. 3, Iranian, aged 15, has an elementary school education, too. She is the daughter of participant no. 2. After finishing elementary school, she will continue her education and wants to become a nurse.

Participant no. 4, from Afghanistan, aged 19, also has an elementary school education. She comes from a traditional family and wants to be a beautician, but as she had not been very active in education or job searching, finding a job was a big motivation for her. She seems to have strong socio-political beliefs, but has a nice personality, although she is somewhat shy and withdrawn.

Later two more migrant women from Afghanistan joined us for some of the activities, but they were not constant and it is hard to come to any real conclusions about their motivations. It seems that their young age was a factor for not being constant and also that they already had a circle of friends as they attended school and did not need the social activities.

Our search for the participants started with going to various institutions who work with migrant women in our area. We obtained some contacts, but due to communicational obstacles and the busy schedule of some women we did not find any participants. Then, through personal connections, we came into contact with a woman from Iran who speaks good English and who understood the project idea and liked it from the start. She agreed to participate and she also knew some more migrant women who could benefit from the project. She connected us with more candidates who we then first talked to individually. Some did not express interest and one woman really wanted to take part but could not due to being highly pregnant at the time. After initial talks we had four serious candidates.

Next we organised a group meeting with the four candidates. We presented the project and the activities again and gave them a chance to ask more questions and tell us their thoughts and expectations.

What attracted them to the project the most was the creative nature of the activities and the informal way of working and communicating. They also liked that they would be able to express themselves freely. They appreciated that the activities were not graded and that there were no specific standards or achievements expected from them. They felt this was very different from other activities they usually have to take part in, like language courses, meetings with the authorities etc. which they said were formal and scripted. They hoped that the Creative Fem Power activities would be more liberating, more relaxing, more fun.

Another positive aspect for them was the social aspect. The women barely knew each other before and they looked forward to be able to socialise with other migrant women on a weekly basis. They said that their social life was basically non-existent and that they mostly stayed at home or went to language classes. Their hope was that the activities would bring something new to their boring weekly routine.

Learning more about how to find a job was another attractive point for them. Especially the youngest member of the group felt that she needed to find work but did not know where to start.

They also asked about the schedule of the activities as they all had activities and obligations as migrants to learn Slovenian and to integrate into society and also as mothers of school age children who needed their clothes and food to be ready on a daily basis. It turned out that workdays were not a good time so we decided to do our activities on Saturdays. The fact that part of their weekends would be dedicated to Creative Fem Power did not bother them at all. They saw it as a welcome addition to their weekly schedules because of the reasons listed above.

5 Creative Fem Power workshops – country perspectives

In this chapter, we provide a description of the most notable moments and lessons learned when conducting the four workshops we created. Workshops are presented in chronological order.

5.1 Explorative workshop

Finland

Since we had two separate groups due to the different levels of language (cf. above), we had to divide the time for the workshops in two, which led into not being able to do all the planned activities. To make up for the lost time per group, we did more hours for the workshops: 30 hours and 30 minutes, so 15 hours and 15 minutes per group.

Our first 3-hour-meetings were done via Zoom due to Covid restrictions at the time, so we needed to change the introductions into online form. We developed a couple of new exercises for this setting. The participants introduced themselves by giving their names, saying where they were from and what was their favourite / funniest word in Finnish and why. The words were written on a flipchart so that everyone could see them and it was made sure that everyone knew what they meant. This was an easy way to get everyone participating through the online setting. Everyone turned their camera on for their own introduction. After we had gathered the words, we made some poems using them. This exercise was also developed for the zoom setting. In this game each of the participants said one thing that they liked and asked if anyone else felt the same (i.e. "I like cats. Is there anyone else here who likes cats?" "I like swimming. Is there anyone else here who likes swimming?") and other participants replied with using the thumbs-up -reaction. Every subject was discussed among the people who liked it ("Oh you like cats, do you have any?" "Where do you go for swimming?").

The online meeting was a challenge with the lower-level language group, but both groups were excited and hopeful for later meetings to be in person, which we luckily managed to arrange in spite of restrictions on gatherings at the time.

After the online meeting we had two more workshops for both groups, one at Laajasalon opisto and the other one at Teatterimuseo. At Laajasalon opisto we did 'Getting together', 'Word Puzzle', 'Something about me' and 'Sensing and Listening' as exercises. With the A1-group we also had time for a 'Find the Word' exercise, and it was beneficial for the participants to have more incentives for beginning the conversation, with the A2 group we had lengthier conversations during all the exercises. We ended our first in person meeting with intense feelings and discussions of both groups' impressions and hopes for the future workshops. Both groups were excited and happy to be part of the program. With the A1 group the main positives were having fun to lighten up the mood during sometimes frustrating language studies, and the number of new words they were learning. It was suggested that we should prepare food together during our meetings. A2 group participants thought the day had been fun and refreshing, educational with both being with yourself and language learning, and were excited for more. They felt they got to express themselves in several different ways during the day and that their group dynamics were really good. After the workshops we received messages about how much fun and lovely times everyone had.

At the meetings in Teatterimuseo we made the biggest changes regarding the programme to make the most use of the facilities we had. We did a small tour and discussed Finnish theatre history and buildings. Many found out that some prominent buildings they had noticed in the centre of Helsinki were theatre buildings. We explored exhibitions on Finnish National Theatre and Modern Dance. The exhibition on modern dance sparked conversations about different kinds of dance traditions around the world. Touring a museum with immigrants and having conversations about the history helps to better understand the culture. It's also helpful to include other cultures in the discussion and do some comparisons to find out both things that we have in common and things that are different, and to appreciate both. The culture of their countries of origin is not erased by Finnish culture. With the A2-group there was a lot more discussion about theatre cultures throughout the tour, and discussions about the themes of the plays presented in the exhibitions were talked about more in depth.

We also used the museum's puppetry stage and different types of puppets. The participants were asked to take a look at the puppets and tell us what kind of characters they were. This included some basic vocabulary from different animal characters to witches, kings etc. The instructors showed them how the puppets are used and had short conversations with participants as the puppet characters. After that everyone got to participate in making small puppetry plays. Using puppetry to think about characters was a good warm-up for later when participants made their own characters and played them. Using silly characters made it possible for participants to get to know new vocabulary and use it in creative ways, when the puppets were in everyday life situations, using magic etc. In the A2-group we had a professional puppeteer from Turkey, so we spent a little bit more time with the puppets. She took other participants with her to create small plays and people watching were throwing in suggestions. People had fun and the plays were really inventive and combining different cultures, with immigrant prince's camels needing winter tires in Finland etc. We also had discussions comparing puppetry traditions in different countries.

At the museum we also did improvisational games: 'Circulating clapping' and 'Kani kani kani' and 'Encounter and acceptance' exercises. 'Circulating clapping' and 'Kani kani kani' were good breaks from a lot of conversation which can be tiring especially for the lower-level group. The 'Encounter and acceptance' exercise with rejection brought up a prominent cultural difference: in Finland it's normal to be blunter and just say "no" directly, but the participants kept replying "Well I would like to, but...", thanking profusely for the suggestion and maybe even suggesting doing the thing later. This brought up a lot of discussions, since in Finland it can be considered not polite and dishonest to say that you'll be doing something if you're not going to. This brought up a lot of feelings, rejection made some "feel horrible". The 'Yes, and' exercise and 'Mimic Gifts' lightened the mood and made everyone laugh again.

Doing something together with a 'Mimic Gift' exercise was really good with the lower-level language group. When most of the words are new, it's really helpful to mix action with language learning. With the A2-group the 'Yes, and' exercises were carried on further to make longer stories. There were a lot of positive vibes and everyone got a little loud while getting excited by their suggestions. In 'Mimic Definition' exercises the participants were

also getting more into it, not just picking up stuff with their hands, but putting on a backpack, using a forklift to carry a washing machine etc. In 'Gift-Giving' and 'Doing something with a mimic gift' people were creating whole scenes, combining the 'Yes, and' -principle with this exercise.

We also added 'A Superhero' exercise using the museum's dressing room. Everyone in the group was instructed to think of a quality in themselves they were proud of and to exaggerate it into a superhero-character, using the dressing room in the Theatre Museum. Trainers gave an example of being good at baking: "I'm a Super Baker, I make the best cakes in the whole universe." Everyone got up on the stage with a someone else (to avoid stage fright from standing there alone) and introduced themselves and their catchphrases. Those who wanted made little scenes with their characters.

One participant was struggling with self-esteem and had a really hard time to come up with something that's good about them. We had discussions with her and tried to make it as easy as possible for her: she could also do the character on something she admired. In the end she had a good experience with it, created an amazing character bringing joy to everyone, and seemed to beam self-confidence on stage. After the exercise she talked about having some internal struggles with how not to be themselves and also just how to be themselves. After this we figured that the way the task was presented could be a little bit triggering to people having problems with their self-esteem, and decided to change the task a little for the next day to make superhero-characters that bring to the world something you wish to bring to the world. Even though it's ok to touch on hard subjects, we want to be sure to not open wounds that we don't have proper tools to close, and self-esteem problems are better handled indirectly where you don't have to pay too much attention to yourself and get self-conscious. The characters in the A1-group were fun and quite simple, like an Octopus that was a 'Super-Hugger' with its eight arms.

In the A2-group we changed the superhero-exercise, this time the participants were instructed to make superhero-characters who had the power to give anything they wanted to the world. With this group we had one participant who was at first hesitant with dressing up because of religious reasons, but once we removed the pressure by assuring her that she could only use a prop she ended up finding something that was suitable to put over her clothes and fitting with her character. The characters were very innovative and the gifts they were giving to the world were really touching, especially since everyone seemed to really sincerely make their wishes come true with the characters. We had a character called Human, who had a brother in another country with closed borders, wanting to remove the borders, all presented in a dramatic monologue. The world was given equal education for everyone by The Teacher, removal of bad people from their home countries by the Queen of Peace, but also springtime with endless flowers from the Lady of Flowers and glorious winter days with lots of snow from the Winter Fairy. We had a Tea Pot thawing everyone's hearts with some warmth and a Queen of Beauty bringing everyone love and happiness.

The participants found the change of scenery really refreshing and especially the dressing room was fun. Since we specialised in improvisational methods and they offered the most variation to their normal studies, people were looking forward to using them also in future workshops.

Germany

We started with the explorative workshop, which took place in the autumn of 2021. Participants were 10 migrant women from different countries, most of whom did not know each other.

At the beginning we introduced the project and the program of the workshop, the atmosphere was relaxed, the women were open and curious. As most of the women had children, we had organised childcare in our rooms, as otherwise participation would not have been possible for the women.

The first exercise was a loosening up exercise, especially the "name game" and the "change of place by eye contact" were well received. During the statue game/pantomime, however, we quickly noticed that contrary to the experience at the LTTA, no deeper emotions emerged here yet and everything moved more on the surface.

In the "find the word" game, the participants had an easy time finding words with a personal meaning that suited them. Words such as health, family, love and home were named.

In the subsequent creative task of creating a collage (something about me), all the women were very committed to the task and engaged in lively conversation with each other. During the presentation, it turned out that some of the women interpreted the task a little differently than intended. Instead of incorporating something personal into the collage, they often just chose motifs from the magazines on topics that the women were interested in (sports, healthy food, fashion).

All of the women were enthusiastic about the relaxation exercise that we incorporated in between.

Since not all the women were on time on the first day and three participants did not show up at all on the second day of the workshop, we addressed things like respect and reliability at the beginning of the second day. This was particularly important to us because some of the exercises build on each other. We started again with a warm-up exercise (accepting and refusing gifts), which noticeably promoted communication. Spontaneously, at the suggestion of one woman, "musical chairs" was played and all participants were exuberant and visibly had fun.

During the exercise "Setting boundaries" it was noticeable that the circles were of different sizes, everyone had their own boundaries.

Afterwards, all women worked on their "lifelines" with a lot of concentration. During the presentation, there were many parallels in the women's lives, both positive and negative.

The feedback at the end of the workshop was consistently positive. The participants felt that the second day was more exhausting, but also more important. All of them found it great to communicate with each other in German. Many of the women have hardly any contact with Germans and therefore have little opportunity to do so.

Italy

Given the characteristics of our group and because one of the conditions was that women participate in all four workshops, we decided to create a pathway that had "The Job Search" as its main theme and that incorporated the different activities planned in the different workshops.

We began on December 13th, scheduling one meeting per week (every Monday), for a total of 16 hours, testing the activities developed in the framework of the IO3 'Creative tools for job seeking'.

From the first meeting, it was clear we must revise the activities involving writing, since our participants wouldn't be able to fulfil tasks that required written results. Instead of having the participants work independently in activities related to biographical work and SWOT analysis, we decided to work with them one-on-one. The trainer then collected the information, reprocessed it, and handed it back to the participant, thus helping her to reconstruct her story and identify her own form points, weaknesses, risks and opportunities for her job search journey.

We thus verified how, with the appropriate adaptations, this methodology of work was perfectly suited even to learners with little knowledge of Italian and, above all, very limited writing and reading skills in our language.

Much appreciated were all the activities related to the use of voice and the preparation of individual videos, because they allowed the learners to learn a lot of information about how to handle a job interview in a pleasant and spontaneous setting.

Slovenia

Our recruitment of participants took quite some time so we started with the explorative workshop in January 2022 with four participants. One of the main features of our group was the lack of knowledge regarding Slovenian, so activities involving writing or speaking needed to be adapted to the abilities of the participants.

Our goal was to try as many exercises as possible while also allowing the participants to voice their opinion on what they want to do.

We started with the introduction of the workshop. We introduced each other, the participants tried to introduce themselves shortly in Slovenian, they told the others what they could about themselves. We discussed the programme and asked them not to be merely passive participants. The rules of the workshops were discussed and proposed by all. Special emphasis was laid on the safety of expression and participation, which was very important to the participants.

We proceeded with **Magic Soap**, **Name game** and **Positive look**. All of these activities were appropriate for our group and were well received. Some awkwardness and shyness was felt at the beginning as the participants had never before been in a similar situation, but not in a negative way.

All games related to using one's body for expression of feelings and for sensing your surroundings were very well received by the group. **Statue technique** produced many amusing situations and laughter while **Sensing and listening** exercises seemed to have a much needed calming effect on our participants who, as we found out in the course of the workshops, carried a lot of stress and trauma on the inside. For this reason, we included relaxation and breathing exercises at the end of each of our sessions.

Something about me was also well received as it uses images to tell something about individual group members. One of the participants showed a picture of a dead flower to describe her feelings at that moment and a picture of a blooming flower to express that this was what she hoped to become.

Activities under **Calming down, empowering ourselves** and **Sharing a personal beautiful view** and **Setting your boundaries** must also be mentioned as successful. The main observation was that the participants enjoyed them as they gave them an opportunity to be in close touch with themselves and with their peers who shared similar life stories. They often commented that they enjoyed doing these activities as they were so different from their usual repetitive daily routines where they had to follow procedure, rules and predictable actions.

Feedback from the participants was very positive. They praised the workshop and the concept of **Creative Fem Power**, mostly because it gave them an opportunity to do something new and different while being themselves. They liked coming to the sessions which took place on Saturdays due to their many responsibilities and activities during the week. They liked the opportunity to explore their thoughts and emotions and share them inside the group. This was a common theme for the entire run of the workshops.

5.2 Language learning workshop

Finland

Once again, we needed to split the hours between the two groups, so we ended up having eight one-hour days for both groups, 16 hours all together.

The A1-group was really tired and quiet at the start of the day. We started discussing some sounds outside the classroom and it led to a discussion of onomatopoeic sounds, going through different animal noises in Finnish and their origins, comparing them to what they're called in the participants' countries of origin. This was so well-liked that we ended up doing the same improvised exercise with the A2-group the next day.

We did voice opening exercises with Finnish vowels and did exaggerated pronunciations repeating words using them. We made traditional Finnish exercises repeating the letter r "ärrän tärrän tärisytän" to help pronouncing the strong Finnish letter r.

We did an exercise where both voice and movement grew bigger in a circle; one person starts by saying a word with movement and the next one repeats the word and movement but exaggerates it until it can't be made any bigger.

Going through onomatopoeic sounds was very exciting for the lower language group as they were able to make guesses and figure out the right answers. The exercises for opening your voice not only opened their voice but helped practice pronunciation. It was relaxing and funny for the participants and they started playing zombies while repeating vowels.

This exercise led quite naturally into doing the 'Meowing Cats' exercises from the Job Seeking workshops. This was especially fun for the A1-group, since for a while they could focus only on expression instead of words. We played the Activity-game, with the A1-group it was more miming, which helped those who learned more kinaesthetically.

We did a new exercise 'Questions about myself'. We asked simple questions: Favourite colour, favourite animal, etc. Even simple questions brought up deeper answers, like favourite colour blue reminding them of the sky in their homelands and how the colour there was different from the one in Finland. After this the participants wrote letters to themselves. In the A1-group some people thought at first that the letters were for the teachers, but after explaining the concept individually to everyone who was confused, they got it.

With the A2-group we had time to go through some Finnish proverbs with funny comics from Karoliina Korhonen.

With both groups we did the 'Statue Technique' exercises. We added a new 'Statue Technique' exercise called "I am a tree", where all the participants create a statue from one thought – the first person is a tree, the next a squirrel, then wind in the leaves, a lumberjack trying to fell the tree and an environmentalist stopping them. After doing this exercise with trees, we did it with Finland twice – first with positive things, then with negative. Positive things were punctuality, safety, freedom, gratefulness, possibilities, greenery, friendliness, health, sociability, beauty and sunlight during summer. Negative things in the statues were darkness, loneliness, taxes, the plural partitive, neighbours not talking, racism, coldness, slippery ground, being far away from one's homeland, depression, having no Finnish friends, high prices and rents, lines in public healthcare. After the statues were formed, we discussed about things that came up and also some positive things not yet included: equality, general well-being, snow, public transport, possibilities for exercising, slow living and peace.

Germany

We started again with 10 women, not all of whom had been present at the first workshop. Since this time the focus was explicitly on language and learning new words, each woman was given a vocabulary booklet at the beginning to write down new terms. The participants who had already taken part in the first workshop told the other women about it.

The exercises also focused clearly on the use of the newly learned language. To loosen up, a word chain was formed after the "I'm packing my suitcase" game. This requires a lot of concentration, the women have to form complete sentences, sometimes a mistake creeps in. You could feel that some of the participants translated the words in their heads first; it was difficult to find words spontaneously.

This time, too, the subsequent relaxation exercise was very well received.

After the lunch break, we devoted ourselves to the acting exercise, the women formed groups and had a some minutes to think up a script; all participants were enthusiastic about the task. During the presentation you could feel the joy of them all, none of the women had had previous experience with acting.

The women were particularly focused when they wrote the 'Letter to Myself'. It's about writing down where you want to be in six months, what you want to have achieved by then.

Finally, we played a word game in a circle after the game Tabu. The women were forced to use different words than perhaps usual, but all managed to explain the terms.

We all found this workshop to be much more active, some of it more fun. The women learned some new words, enjoyed the exchange in German and were partly surprised themselves about their own vocabulary. You had the feeling that the women had grown closer together. The topics of reliability, punctuality and respectful behaviour no longer had to be discussed so intensively in this workshop.

Italy

The Language learning workshop was a very successful blending of the activities developed specifically for this workshop and from many of those developed in the Explorative workshop.

We started with the creation of the personal dictionary, which accompanied the learners until the end of the activities, gradually being enriched with new terms and idiomatic expressions.

All activities proposed by the language learning workshop were tried out, with special emphasis on the role play "Family situation": creating a script and a description for the roles. As the language skills of many of the participants were rather limited, this activity lasted about 8 hours but had surprising results in terms of language learning, as well as in terms of bringing together different ways of understanding family. It was therefore a true cultural exchange that enriched all participants and trainers.

The role play was preceded by the activities 'Sensing and listening', aimed at improving verbal and nonverbal communication, and 'Statue technique', to improve the ability to describe expressions and feelings.

The inclusion of these activities enabled the participants to improve their language and interpersonal skills in a pleasant atmosphere that certainly helped them achieve un hoped-for learning outcomes.

Slovenia

This workshop was done with the same group of participants as the explorative workshop. Two more migrant women joined us during the activities but did not stay until the end.

As their knowledge of Slovenian was quite low, we adapted the activities to their level and focused on developing their vocabulary, learning common phrases and increasing their motivation to continue learning Slovenian, which can be quite challenging due to complex grammar.

First we presented the workshop and dispelled any fears from the participants that it would be too hard for them to participate because of their poor knowledge of Slovenian. The activity was also an opportunity to talk about their obstacles when it comes to learning and using Slovenian. They mostly said that it was a hard language to learn and that they felt that they were not confident enough to use it in real-life situations. One of the participants had not spoken even a word of Slovenian since she arrived in Slovenia, despite taking classes. She said that this was due to her great fear of speaking and lack of self-esteem and learning skills as she had never in her life been allowed to pursue any form of education.

'Find the word' was a fun activity for all as some participants learned that some of the words they chose to tell a story meant something else than they thought they meant. The exercise was very appropriate as it put the women in a position to be creative, improvise with their limited vocabularies and organise their thoughts so they could be expressed in Slovenian. Not all were able to tell long stories about themselves but the exercise was nevertheless a good learning experience for everybody.

It was too big of a challenge for our participants to write an actual **Letter to myself**. We did the exercise as a combination of spoken word and writing down key words related to their future. Words like "happiness", "job", "going back home" were the most common.

The **Role play** activity was easy to do. We simulated various every-day situations like going to the doctor or buying food at the market. The situations were selected by the participants. In preparation we learned some common words and phrases useful in a specific scenario. The participants liked this activity because it was useful for them to learn how to speak in realistic situations.

Word puzzle was another engaging activity. The participants used various newspapers and printed texts to find pictures and words for their story. The activity again allowed them to be creative with the content. The topics of their posters ranged from cooking recipes to current socio-political topics.

Activity was perhaps the most fun of all activities in this workshop. The participants were allowed to use language and gestures to explain a hidden word to others. The fact that they did not have a huge vocabulary to begin with again pushed them to be creative and effective in their presentations. Mistakes were common and fun.

The participants were well aware of the importance of knowing the language of the host-country. Their feedback about this workshop was positive, but they also suggested to have more language-learning activities of this kind in the future.

5.3 Job-seeking workshop

Finland

Once again, we needed to split the hours between two groups, so we did the same as with the language learning -workshops, having 8-hour-days for both groups, 16 hours altogether.

Since we had a chef in our group and cooking had been suggested in our first gathering, we decided to build the day around cooking in the Cable Factory kitchens, in the same building as the Theatre Museum. With the setting of cooking and eating together most of the day was spent in a celebratory mood, like having a house party together. In the A2 group we even had a dance teacher who gave us impromptu dance lessons. We deviated quite a lot from the proposed activities since cooking and eating took up so much time, but most of the discussions ended up in similar fields naturally – we were talking about people's past in their home countries, how they ended up here and about future plans.

We started the days with light warm-ups most participants were familiar with ('Clapping hands' and 'Kani Kani Kani'). After that we did a SWOT-analysis including soft skills and some role play exercises for different kinds of job situations and job interviews. This led to a lot of conversations about the job market and difficulties with people with a higher education, but without adequate language skills in Finnish, which continued throughout the day.

After the morning exercises we went through the menu and recipes alongside other common cooking vocabulary. We divided into three groups (starter soup, main course and dessert) with one instructor leading each of the groups. This allowed time for the shyest participants to really practice their conversational skills in Finnish. During the cooking there were talks about everyone's families both in Finland and in the home countries, and the differences and similarities in food cultures and ingredients used, like how traditionally Finnish herbs and spices are dried because of the long winter. We had asked everyone in advance to think of some really traditional dish or ingredient in their country, and since the participants were from different sides of the world everyone really learned about fruits and spices they had never heard of before.

We had also asked the participants to think about their favourite music both from Finland and their home countries. While cooking we listened to Finnish music and everyone got to share their recommendations. We talked about having singing as a hobby and how some consider reading the lyrics while listening to songs as a good way to learn a language. While eating we listened to everyone's favourite music from their home countries and asked them to tell us what the lyrics were about. It was fun to notice how music is a

universal language and most of the time you could almost tell what the song was about before it was explained.

Aside from presenting everyone's songs mealtime was very relaxed and there were more one-on-one conversations with the participants. The chef in our group told us about her plans to open up her own restaurant after her language studies were done. Because of our own educational and professional backgrounds, we were able to give some really hands on career advice to participants who had a degree in conservation and film directing.

Both of our groups had very heart-warming goodbyes at the end of the day, since we had seen each other one day a week for 4 weeks (+ introduction via zoom). Some had so got used to it that they hadn't realised we'd be on a hiatus until the Affirmative workshops, which almost led to tears. After this workshop we had a lot of positive feedback about splitting into smaller groups, which gave people the opportunity to have more one-on-one conversations with native Finnish speakers. Many mentioned what fun it was to play again; you got to feel like a child again.

Germany

This was the third workshop. In contrast to the previous workshops, this time the women were all known to each other, no introduction was necessary.

We started with the exercise 'The magic wand', in which the participants can make a wish. As this workshop took place only one day after the beginning of the Ukrainian war, of course many wishes like peace and security were expressed.

A large part of the planned time was taken up by the exercise 'The autobiographical journey', which is divided into three sections. This first deals with the time before the flight to or entry into a new country, and then with the time afterwards. It became apparent that the task required some explanation, but every woman understood the exercise. The presentation of the worksheets was partly very personal, the mood somewhat subdued.

Another exercise was the 'Swot analysis', in which the women talked about their strengths and weaknesses. Especially the hard skills and soft skills were explained and discussed.

As a preparatory exercise for speaking in front of a camera, the women were asked to write down their résumé in a first step and to present this résumé orally in a second step with a selected partner.

When the women felt ready to appear in front of the camera, a video was shot of each of them orally recounting their CVs and talking about their career aspirations.

After all the videos had been completed, the group came back together and they watched the different videos / CVs together.

The atmosphere was very cheerful and relaxed. Seeing each other in a group on the screen and talking about their career aspirations while being the focus of attention was unusual for most of the women. Nevertheless, all participants agreed to show the video to everyone.

Italy

The Job seeking workshop was ideated considering how migrant women find themselves living in a completely new culture, of which they do not know the language, cultural customs and social roles. Often, even if they had studied and had had a job in their country of origin and perhaps had held important professional roles, once they found themselves immersed in the host culture, they often lost awareness of their skills, knowledge, and talents.

To help them enter the labour market we identified the biographical work as the most suitable approach. The main aim of the workshop was to accompany the participants into a journey of self-confidence, to become aware (or more aware) of their own strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and abilities, through the “Creative Biography Work” method. The final purpose for the participants is to use this gained awareness to design their own personal strategy for job seeking.

Biographical work is a fairly well-known topic, but the innovative element of the Creative Fem power project is to make migrant women work on their biography by means of creative tools, first of all through the use of videos, where the protagonists are the migrant women themselves.

Representing their lives before, during and after migration, women will retrace their training experiences, both formal and informal, their work experiences and the skills they have learned during the migration journey.

Recognising their skills also means knowing how to highlight them when they have a job interview, thus increasing their chances of getting a job that is relevant to their abilities and talents.

“Creative tools for job seeking” lasted for 15 hours, divided into 20 didactic units, lasting 45 minutes each. The target audience were migrant women, more specifically migrant women of working-age.

The activities were carried out partly as a group and partly individually. After an initial explanation of the project and the objectives of the course, the first phase of the workshop was to have group activities, dedicated to bringing out the competences, abilities, and talents of each participant. These results were obtained through methods that included timelines, role plays, theatrical work, audio materials and recordings (i.e. for the setting and the use of voice).

The first phase was followed by an individual work phase aimed at drafting a video script about their personal history and self-promotion, which was then recorded, with the constant support of the trainers.

The second phase was to have a simulation of a job interview with the trainer who acted as a real employer who asked direct questions to the participants in order to put them in a difficult situation and make them explain how to deal with such a kind of situation.

After the videos had been recorded, the group activity resumed with the viewing of the videos and the collection of feedback from the participants. Feedback was of fundamental importance, as showing others their story before and after the migration, albeit in a protected environment, allowed participants to visualise their paths, recognise what they were able to do before, what they learnt during the migration journey and what they experienced in the host country.

At the end of the activities, all the skills and experiences that had emerged during the workshop were reported in a profile created for each participant through an online form that provided a formal document with the skills acquired during the workshop. Participants will thus be able to produce their own CV and concretely use it afterwards in job seeking.

Slovenia

Finding a job is very high on the migrants' list of priorities, next only to learning the host country language. This was again confirmed by the participants during the course of this workshop.

The most memorable activities were SWOT analysis and the lifeline exercises. For all the women except participant no. 1 the SWOT analysis was the first time they considered their strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities in a structured way. They also learned about the difference between and importance of soft and hard skills. It was apparent that they felt that the fact that they were migrants puts them in a very unfavourable position with regard to finding a job. They also felt that the system and employment market practices in Slovenia are hard to navigate and present additional obstacles to migrants looking for a job.

This type of thinking influences their motivation in a negative way. It was also hard for them to point out their strengths and opportunities, which is partly due to the feeling that they as migrants don't have a lot of opportunities and partly due to their modesty and inability to recognise their own strengths and talents. They all agreed that they were prepared to work hard if given a chance. They also pointed out many positive personality traits of other group members like kindness, reliability and a willingness to help others.

The lifeline exercise was quite dramatic, as a lot of sad memories were uncovered. Especially participants no. 1 and no. 2 - as the oldest members of the group - felt a lot of regret about leaving their lives in Iran. Participant no. 2 was especially affected by her memories as she felt that she could achieve so much more for herself and her children if she was given a fair chance in life. The exercise was very emotional for everybody.

As a whole the workshop was a success because it provided the women with a means to reflect on their life goals and needs. Especially participants no. 3 and no. 4 - as the youngest of the group - were for the first time put in a position to think about and discuss their employment goals. Participant no. 4 had a wish to find a job for some time but was very passive about it. Shortly after we had finished our series of workshops she found a part-time job and we believe that this workshop contributed to her motivation and resolve to find work.

5.4 Affirmative workshop

Finland

Since these were our last workshops and we wanted to put emphasis on affirmation, we decided to have two 5-hour-days with both groups, 10 hours for each and 20 altogether. We made a lot of variations to this programme since we had been with the groups for a long time and knew what kind of programmes they were hoping for and expecting from us. Some variations were done on the spot, since we had smaller groups than what we had anticipated while planning the workshops.

Our first days were at the Theatre Museum. During the week we had the workshops, there was a combination of Eid and a strike of childcare workers, which led to not many people being able to take part on these days. From the A1 group we had 3 participants and 5 from the A2 group.

With the A1 group we started with some improvisational warming-up games, during which many individual words raised questions with the participants. Obviously, since the group was so small, it was easier for them to ask questions they might have just ignored in a bigger group. We ended up talking about oddities in Finnish grammar and differences in dialects, comparing cultures, similar traditional drinks you make in different countries, and Finnish oddities like sauna and the obsession with buckets.

With the A2 group we knew one person was coming in late, so we started with discussions on how everyone was doing while waiting. This led into talking about having and making connections to Finnish people. Some had many (boyfriend, their parents, husband, hobbies, going on dates), while some had a lot of trouble making contact. Some of those who found making connections easy had a hard time understanding why it wouldn't be, so we discussed about how many things in your childhood and later experiences can have an effect on your openness. A person who had come to Finland as a teenager during the refugee crisis and the heated conversations going on then subsequently moved to a smaller city with not many people with an immigrant background. She had to endure a lot of prejudice and rejection at a young age. Now Finland has a lot more immigrants than 7 years ago, and it's not such a weird thing to be from somewhere else, so someone who came here a year ago and moved to Helsinki had almost only positive experiences. We talked about what builds up resilience and how changing your attitude towards hardships can't be done with one decision, but it's a slow process that requires positive affirmation. After the conversations we moved on to the improvisational exercises, but soon after had another group therapy session regarding the situation in Ukraine. Basically, we spent the morning hours making sure everyone's feelings were heard and validated.

The afternoons of the first days were dedicated to poetry and making plays. With both groups we did a fold-up poem, where one person wrote a sentence and the first word for next sentence and another person completed the sentence and gave a first word for the next sentence. The poets got to read their poems aloud on stage. We also made poems as a group effort with everyone saying one word or sentence at a time in turns. This playful

way of making poems was great for people who are not really into poetry. We emphasised the aspect of being playful with the language and how you can convey thoughts even without perfect grammar, which is very liberating since the Finnish language is quite a grammar monster. Doing poems together also removes pressure of “coming up with a perfect line”. Even a very plain sentence can have its meaning flipped completely by the sentence coming after it. At the end of the day, we made small plays using the stage and dressing room. With A1 being the smaller group, we had some extra time we spent touring the Hotel and Restaurant Museum, continuing our conversations regarding culture, beverages and food from the morning.

The A1 group really liked being in a smaller group and the number of conversations it enabled. The A2 group had mixed feelings: while they agreed that a small group enabled really intimate conversations, they felt that in a bigger group you got more energised.

Our second days of the workshop were spent at Laajasalon opisto, with the main event being building a fire on their grill and having a very traditional end of workshop-barbecue-party with sausages.

Since our last workshop had a number of difficult topics, we started the days lightly with some traditional Finnish children’s outdoor games like ‘Mirror’ (similar to ‘Red light, green light’). After that we moved on to the indoor game ‘Laiva on lastattu’ (‘The ship has been loaded with’), where you have to think of different things starting with a specific letter that could be in the ship. This was good for expanding vocabulary and also practising Finnish grammar with adjectives. We had some talks comparing Finnish children’s games and noticed that Finnish language games were quite unique compared to other countries.

Since we had really small groups in the first gathering, we decided to do collaborative poems again. This time we continued the exercise and after poems moved on to complete stories, and then stories being acted out with two people adding on to a story and others acting it out as it was told.

After this with group A1 we had the photography assignment, which produced very mixed reactions. A few people were really excited and took multiple pictures they wanted to share, but most just took a quick shot of something random and seemed quite disinterested. This was probably due to the task being a solo task when the participants were more used to doing things together and expected us to go on with this, which led us to dropping the assignment from group A2. Instead, we gave them their letters to themselves written a few months back and after reading them, asked them to write another letter, but one where they could write up things and feelings they wanted to leave behind and let go of. After writing these letters we burned them in the barbecue pit.

The rest of the day was spent by the fire. Many people were experiencing the Finnish sausage grilling tradition for the first time and were happy about that. We stayed sitting by the fire for a while after we had finished the “official” part, and some participants who couldn’t make it earlier because of school tests and job interviews came by to say thanks. People got very emotional and hoped that this would be a regular part of the curriculum for Finnish studies.

Germany

In the affirmative workshop the women mainly dealt with themselves, with the topic of self-confidence and their inner attitude. We had only two women among the 10 participants who had not participated in any of the workshops.

After briefly explaining to the women what the affirmative workshop would be about, we started the first exercise.

Together we collected sentences that contained a negative statement, e.g. "I can't do that" or "I don't feel like it." Afterwards, the women were asked to transform the collected statements into positive sentences on their own. Some of the participants were not immediately aware that negatively worded sentences also have a negative effect on our thoughts and actions. After sharing a few examples, it became clearer how to create positive images.

Afterwards, the women were asked to report negative situations from their biography. Some women could not or did not want to remember negative situations and found the task very difficult.

In the creative exercise 'Every picture tells a story', the women were able to create a picture on a topic of their own choice, either by painting or by means of a photo or a video.

What was striking about this exercise was that none of the participants wanted to create a video, all of the women painted pictures and then photographed themselves with them. This confirmed once again that the women particularly liked the creative exercises.

Accordingly, the enthusiasm was again great during the sewing adventure exercise. The women made key chains with the help of our artists. This was deliberately chosen so that the women would have a positive affirmation to take along and remember in difficult situations.

Unlike previously expected, the creative exercises always took up more time and space than other tasks, so there was no time left for the feedback session in this case.

Italy

To test the material developed in the Affirmative workshop we had to choose activities that involved very limited use of writing, otherwise most of the participants would not have been able to do the task. We also had to consider the expectations of our learners, who were very focused on job searching and unwilling to do activities that were judged too playful.

Again, we worked a lot on integrating activities developed in the different workshops: many body expression activities used as a gateway to language learning, especially terminology related to job interviewing.

The 'Every picture tells a story' activity was particularly popular, because it allowed participants to check their improvements in vocabulary and verbal expression skills.

Slovenia

At the start of the last workshop in the series the participants were a well-connected group and comfortable with each other. The goal of this workshop was to tie everything we did so far together and end on a positive note.

The first round of self-affirmation and creative visualisation started slowly as the women needed time to think about negative aspects of their lives to focus on. This was understandable as the memory of the lifeline exercise was still present. Instead of going deep into their problems the women this time focused more on manageable personal flaws like being too negative about the future or being too passive. It was not very hard to turn these statements into positive ones.

The visualisation part of the exercise was well received as it was again a chance for the women to immerse themselves deeply into their thoughts and feelings which had a relaxing effect.

The second round was similar to the first with some changes to the negative statements. This time they were more daring, like "I am unemployed" or "My social life is not good enough" When turned into positives, these statements signalled a more optimistic personal vision of the future.

The women very much enjoyed 'Culinary self-expression' and 'Adventures in knitting' activities. Before the cooking activity the women went to buy the ingredients which gave them an opportunity to practice speaking in a real-life situation. The cooking part was fun and relaxed. It was evident that they have some real culinary talent.

Knitting was a really engaging activity. The women had some previous knitting skills but during the activity they learned to do some new and more advanced patterns and shapes. They enjoyed being able to create something with their hands.

The biggest change or addition to the schedule of the explorative workshop was the addition of two painting sessions. We did this upon the request of our participants as one of our mentors is a skilled painter and was able to do the activity with them. We decided to include this activity mainly because we wanted to give them an opportunity to be really creative and also to keep them motivated for further workshops.

The session was also aimed at providing them with the opportunity to test their courage in a safe environment as they were painting for the first time and that takes some courage to do. This was also an opportunity for them to "speak" without using language as language barriers make it more difficult for them to express themselves in Slovenian society.

It turned out to be a great success. After being a bit unsure of themselves, the participants surprisingly quickly immersed themselves in painting. One of them, who was really afraid of speaking Slovenian and was not capable of doing it at all at then, became the most engaged. She was animated and vocal, asking questions on how to paint this and that, trying out various techniques with great care and enthusiasm. She started telling us how

the picture she was painting was an expression of her life which had been dull and dark but was getting better, partly because she attended the workshops. Another woman said her painting represented love and another that it represented hope. Throughout the activity the participants were relaxed and seemingly in control of their situation. It had an empowering and creativity boosting effect on them.

Although it was a different kind of activity, we can say that it touched on many topics from the explorative section of the workshop programme: it added to a sense of group connection as they were trying something new together, laughing at their mistakes, encouraging each other and increased their awareness of their surroundings and space, their ability to sense and observe (needed for painting), it made them more ready to accept their limitations as artists (acceptance of mistakes) and it gave them better self-esteem by showing them that they could create something nice. At the end each of the participants created her own painting that she kept as her unique artistic creation.

6 Workshop results

In this chapter the results created during our workshop activities are presented. These are tangible or intangible results achieved by migrant women, like art works, changes in skills, attitude, motivation and more. The results vary from country to country and are described separately for each partner country.

Finland

The participants created collaborative poems, like this one from the A2 group, translated from Finnish:

Travelling...

I'll travel when we have the holidays

Travelling helps with controlling your mind

I like to travel, since I'm interested in new places and a new country

I travel in my mind

AWAY AWAY AWAY, I shout

Alone in the islands, I live on the beach

Eastern Helsinki, SII¹ pays for all

We were able to give concrete advice with museum work, film industry and puppetry. Most of our participants are still continuing their language studies and some are working part-time with the studies. We were able to encourage our most closed-off participants to express themselves and gave a lot of encouragement to not only get a job but to just get out of the house for starters, find a hobby and create some connections.

¹ SII stands for Social Insurance Institution, Kansaneläkelaitos in Finnish, which is responsible for social benefits

Germany

During the workshops, the participants created their own life paths, made a collage with life plans and wrote a 'Letter to myself' with wishes for the next six months. These letters were now also sent to the participants to make it easier to understand what they had wished for themselves and whether these wishes had come true. This is also a good method to give a new impulse afterwards.

50 per cent of the participating women have either continued their professional orientation after the workshops or are in the process of looking for an apprenticeship. Others have become involved in voluntary work.

All participants were touched by the workshops in such a way that they have more confidence in themselves.

Italy

The main result of the activities is surely the greater ability to interact with people who do not belong to one's own community, understood as coming from the same country. This greater ability to communicate and interact will improve the ability to establish social relationships with more people, thus expanding one's social and friendship network, contributing to a better integration of the learners.

Another important result achieved by our learners is the greater awareness of how the labour market works in Italy, and of what a worker's legitimate expectations can be in terms of tasks, working hours, and schedule availability. This increased awareness will help our learners to organise their family commitments, considering that the reconciliation of work, family and private life is, indeed, the result of a compromise and that very rarely are family and private life the prevailing reason.

Slovenia

The results of the Slovenian workshops can be divided into two categories: intangible and tangible ones.

Intangible results manifested themselves as impacts the project had on the participating migrant women and also on the mentors. For migrant women they are changes in attitudes, confidence, openness in communication, assertiveness, Slovenian language skills etc.

For the mentors they are changes in our understanding of migrant women as human beings, with their dreams, wishes, daily problems, personal flaws etc. We better understand the role creativity can play in the education and integration of migrants. We also better understand our roles as educators, mentors etc., when it comes to migrants, especially migrant women, who carry with them often traumatic experiences and social roles that are unknown to men.

These results are described in more detail in previous sections and also in the Takeaway section.

Tangible results of the activities in Slovenia were:

- a) Four unique paintings by the migrant women. In the first workshop we included a painting workshop that produced four paintings. The participants had no or – in one case – very little painting experience before, but under the direction of a mentor who is also a painter they created unique and beautiful works that are direct reflections of their feelings and personalities.
- b) A video documenting the visit to the market and a store. The participants went shopping for some cooking ingredients. The purpose was to interact with Slovenian people in a real-life situation and to learn some Slovenian words and phrases in the process. The shopping and later cooking activity was recorded and a 7-minute video was created.

Shortly after the conclusion of the workshops one of the participants found a part-time job. The search for a job started already during the workshops.

7 Impact on the participants

Finland

Our groups were really happy with the workshops and gained energy and new insights. They learned a lot of new words to express their feelings and also nonverbal ways to express themselves. They learned that language is not the only obstacle in communication and light-hearted games made it easier for everyone to talk about their troubles. Finnish people can be more reserved, and many participants had struggled with the cultural differences. The activities have helped the participants to feel more connected and open with each other.

We created a very safe space for everyone in the workshops and this allowed people to share their feelings openly.

Since the two groups had so much difference in their language skills that it affected the depth of conversations, the biggest effects for each group was different, too. With the A1 group, the biggest gain for the participants was in language learning and opportunities to practise basic conversations with native Finnish speakers. On the A2 level we had bigger impact on enhancing self-knowledge and -confidence with our conversation topics.

Germany

"Many people should do this workshop, not just us here at Hispi."

This quote from a participant in the workshop reflects the mood of the participants very well. Initial uncertainty about the difficulty of the exercises, for example, gave way to the statement that the exercises were in no way difficult. The exercises were fun and a feeling of togetherness developed among the participants.

The effort was rather to think about oneself and to deal with one's own life, said one participant. The impulse to think about one's own future was new for many participants.

All participants enjoyed working together and wished for this kind of workshop more often.

The contacts made in the workshop remained with some participants even after six months. These women would probably not have met or got to know each other otherwise.

In conclusion, it can be said that many of the participants had a hard time sticking to agreements and e.g. showing up for the workshops on time or at all. Also the perseverance to participate for two full days was not present in some women. Apparently the women were often not used to "working" for a whole day.

Nevertheless, the later follow-up interviews also showed that the women were very happy to be part of the project and enjoyed the joint work with women from other countries very much, especially the exchange in German.

Some quotes:

"The day today was more exhausting, but very important."

"I am surprised how big the vocabulary is."

"I am very happy because I am doing useful things with nice colleagues."

"I learn a lot of new words, which I think is very good."

"I hope everyone stays healthy and that we all do the next workshop together."

"I am not satisfied ... I want more - another day! Today we were like a family."

"I feel very good - food was good, we laugh together! In summer we can do this outside!"

Italy

The activities took place over a period of about 6 months, starting in December 2021 and ending in early June 2022. During this period, the trainers met with the participants on average once a week. Sometimes these were group meetings, often in an informal setting; at other times they were individual guidance sessions, during which the trainers, together with the individual participant, would check on the progress made in the job search or in achieving the goals she had set for herself.

Through this continuous contact, it is possible to draw a picture of the impact the workshops had on the participants and the results achieved through the project activities.

The most striking result is certainly the improvement in social interaction skills. The lack of knowledge of the Italian language and the difficulties in decoding verbal, but often also nonverbal messages, in many cases provoked reactions in our learners with a certain level of aggressiveness, because what was said was misunderstood and interpreted as disrespectful or as an attempt at overpowering. As language skills and the ability to decode nonverbal messages improved, this level of aggressiveness, which had often been a latent element of communication, was lowered.

Slovenia

The activities had a number of noticeable positive effects on individual participants and the group as a whole.

- Stronger motivation and drive to be active

The participants found motivation in the informal and creative nature of the workshop activities. They saw it as a way to make their boring daily lives more interesting. Even though they had a lot of educational activities in their schedule already, they found motivation to attend every workshop, even at the weekends. For us this was a sign that they were eager to participate in various types of educational and social activities if they find them interesting and engaging enough. Their comments were mainly that these activities were different and less formal than their usual activities for migrants and that they didn't see them as a burden but as a welcome change.

- Better emotional state

The women expressed multiple times that their emotional state was better, because they participated in the workshops, and that this was one of the reasons they liked to come.

- Better self-image and self-awareness

This was especially apparent in our oldest participant who grew up in an extremely conservative part of Iran and was scared emotionally by a series of events that made her sad and hopeless about her life. After she had started coming to the workshops, her emotional state improved visibly. She discovered that she had a lot of creativity inside her and a lot of wisdom she can share with the world. She became more confident and happier; she even began to tell jokes. She said that before she had been “a sad and closed girl but now she feels happier and open like a flower”. She often used imagery related to flowers, like growing or blooming, when she was describing her feelings. Before joining the project, she did not speak any Slovenian at all because she was too afraid to do so, but during the workshops she started to use some Slovenian words and simple phrases for the first time.

- Greater ability to share personal experiences

The participants shared many of their personal stories, some of them very tragic, which had never been told to anyone before. This was especially true for the oldest group member who really had a tragic life but did find the courage to speak about it for the first time, which felt cathartic for her. Some other very personal and tragic stories were also shared and the feeling was that this helped the participants to deal with what happened better.

- Greater ability to take action

Participant no. 4, the youngest member of the group, wanted to find a job but did not know where to start. She lacked the courage and knowledge to search for work. Soon after the end of the workshops she found a part-time job and she was able to do so also because she was more focused to search for it and more confident to apply.

Participant no. 1 already worked in the area of migrant integration when the workshops started but since then she became more active and is now a part of a group of migrants that has a goal to form their own organisation and work independently.

What we see as important is the fact that improvements described above were not observed only by the mentors but were also reported by the participants as subjective self-observations.

On the group level there was a noticeable feeling of friendship, although the women had barely known each other before the activities started. They became close and still are, even though the activities have ended. They now act like a support group for one another which is very important for people in their situation.

8 Impact on the mentors and partner organisations

Finland

Teatterimuseo has made a lot of new connections with immigrant organisations during our planning period. Our collaboration partner Laajasalon opisto (Laajasalo institute) is interested in using creative methods in language learning and they'll probably adopt some of our methods into their toolbox in the future and we'll continue a collaboration in some way.

We had little experience with working with immigrant groups beforehand, so we learned a lot of basic things. We learned how to speak slowly and simply enough without simplifying the meanings too much. Working with two different language skill groups was really beneficial to us for both learning where the differences in understanding language are and what types of exercises and on what level were best for each group. We learned a lot from our multicultural participants about their cultures and also from our own; some exercises that are really popular with Finnish people did not work at all in the workshops.

We've also gained a lot of experience with regard to carrying out these kinds of projects in the future.

Germany

The time perception of the participating women differs strikingly from our expectations. Few have the stamina to complete a task that takes several hours. An understanding for the task was challenging to achieve at first.

We were able to nudge the women in a figurative sense, but it did not go as far as we had hoped. Most of them stick to what they have always done.

The expectations we had have adjusted while working with the women. On the one hand, the mentors have had to develop more patience; on the other hand, it has been a little disillusioning.

What expectations do I bring with me as a mentor?

At least it was possible to set impulses for a thought process during the workshops.

It turned out that creative methods are quite beneficial in language mediation and also in other areas of work such as job training.

The creative methods could be individually adapted to the participants and their prerequisites.

Even difficult topics, such as talking about one's own life, could be resolved through the use of creative means and thus an ease could be restored.

Through the preparatory work and the templates (including the content), good results can be achieved that can also be reliably implemented in other countries.

Between mentors and participants, the workshops were a confidence-building measure that leads to a better dialogue.

Italy

As it often happens in learning contexts, the activities became an occasion of mutual exchange between the participants and the mentors. The contact with the female learners, and with their personal stories and backgrounds, left a mark on the mentors as well, especially because they had the chance to listen, to make efforts of understanding and identification, to reflect upon and elaborate, to come up with new ideas, as well as appropriate communication tones, methods, and strategies. At the end of the experience, the most important lessons learned by the trainers are:

- 1) You don't have to be an actor to introduce theatrical elements into your training activities, you don't have to be a singer to get your learners to use their voices, you don't have to be a painter to solicit the creativity of your learners and use it for your learning purposes;
- 2) Using creativity flexibly, adapting it to your specific group of learners, helps to facilitate learning and improve learning outcomes;
- 3) Using creative activities helps to create and enhance group work and a sense of belonging to the group, improving the performance of individuals and the ability to learn from each other.
- 4) The playful dimension of learning is itself learning.

Slovenia

In Slovenia there were four mentors. Working with migrant women in the context related to creativity was a new experience for us all.

What was an important realisation for us is that migrants – people who come from different cultural environments – are people like us. They have their own life goals, their dreams, their intimate inner worlds, their talents and potentials. They are parents who wish the best for their children, they are people who want to work and be productive, they are citizens who wish to co-create our societies, they are friends and colleagues. But what they don't have is knowledge of language, of the social network, of how the host society and its institutions work etc. During the educational and integrational process, they are often put in lifeless situations where they are passive observers and where sometimes specific results are expected from them.

The workshop activities showed us that they were very eager to be able to show their informal side, to be in a less formal setting, to be able to develop and show their talents. In fact, we were surprised, how little was needed for them to open up and how much of a difference it made.

We also learned how much cultural norms and patterns can shape and influence people. This was especially true with our participant no. 2 and participant no 4. Number 2 had had a very difficult life as a woman and a mother in a very conservative environment. This affected her a lot, mostly psychically. She seemed to be a very talented and capable person, but her potential was intentionally prevented from developing and she still had

some learning difficulties because of this. Participant no. 4 also comes from a more traditional family where her role as a woman seemed to be limited in some ways. For example, we wanted to include her in some other activities of DISORA but she could not do it because she is a girl. Because of these we are now more aware of cultural contexts and we will use this awareness better when approaching migrants and planning activities with them.

In terms of skills we improved our communication skills as all of the participants spoke very little or no Slovenian. Sometimes English was used, sometimes Farsi was used and sometimes a mix of language and body language was used. We feel we are now more capable of listening and observing people and understanding what they feel even if we don't understand the language very well.

We are also more aware of the importance of taking small steps. We can say that the workshops had a clear and positive impact on the participants. How big the impact was is a subjective category and it is different for every group member and will be different for every group member in the future. Maybe speaking a few words and phrases in Slovenian is not a lot for most people, but for participant no. 2 it is a big improvement. Finding a part-time job in a restaurant is again perhaps not the best employment solution, but for participant no. 4 it is incredibly important because it will help her in many other areas of her life and social integration.

9 The takeaway – country perspectives

In this chapter we summarise our experiences and lessons learned while working with migrant women. The experiences are described from the perspective of the mentors that conducted the workshops in each partner country. Though we shared many common experiences, the takeaway from each country is described separately.

Finland

We felt the project to be overall a positive experience both for us and the participants. The planned activities are a good basis for planning the actual workshops, but the most important thing is to listen and observe the group and select the most fitting for the group, also making use of the available facilities and the expertise of the mentors.

We had originally planned to have all our meetings at the same place in our museum, but due to the circumstances we ended up changing locations quite a bit. This proved to be actually beneficial, since new environments sparked up new conversations. We felt that the museum was a great setting for working with immigrant groups, since it enabled conversations about the cultures of both Finland and the participants' home countries.

Our biggest success was seeing how people opened up and created friendships. Our groups were really diverse and it was great to see people with different backgrounds and starting points finding common humanity and being able to come together.

We are now more prepared for creating more workshops and activities for immigrants. We have further planned to apply for special allowances to offer similar workshops for immigrants for free in the future.

Since one of the problems most of our participants faced in Finland was making contact and creating friendships with Finnish people, and these workshops are great for breaking the ice, opening up conversations and creating a feeling of community, we are hoping to further develop parts of the workshops to be done with groups that have both immigrants and people born in Finland.

Germany

Creative methods played a crucial role in making communication much easier for the group of women. They all showed a great interest in speaking German and learning new words and expressions. The focus of the communication was solely on the women, which was an unfamiliar experience for them but was positively perceived by all. The women are highly motivated to integrate into German society and are eager to expand their knowledge about Germany and its people. They hope to have more opportunities to interact with Germans. During the communication process, the women were encouraged to express themselves through the creation of collages, art work, and video clips. These

activities further fostered their sense of belonging and helped them to communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively.

Italy

If we had to sum up the Creative Fem Power project in two words, they would be "Fantasy and Flexibility".

Fantasy because thinking outside the box and proposing activities that do not fit into the traditional methodology helps the emerging of learners' skills, abilities and talents that otherwise would not come to light. In addition, imagination allows the opening of unexpected channels of communication, which can lead to results that are totally surprising and far above expectations.

Flexibility because working with creativity means taking responsibility for collecting what individual trainees create and turning it into a learning opportunity for all, but also, above all, it means adapting tools and activities to the specific needs, abilities, and expectations of your group of learners.

The activities developed in the **Creative Fem Power** project give you, as a trainer, clues as to how you can use them but, more importantly, they urge you to experiment with new ways and new applications to achieve your intended learning outcomes.

Slovenia

From our perspective, **Creative Fem Power** was a success. We believe it is a good concept with great potential to improve the lives of migrant women.

The biggest strength of **Creative Fem Power** is its capacity to boost confidence and stimulate creativity and reflexion of one's life situation, the most important elements for finding solutions to life challenges.

What we noticed the most were the changes in the attitude and personalities of the participants. The changes, we believe, were not actual new personality traits forming but the already existing ones newly uncovered and strengthened: creativity, self-awareness, motivation, social personality etc. This change on a personal level was the most noticeable and definitive. Changes in skills like job-finding and language skills were present but not so clearly observable. This is not unexpected. Each person is different and to achieve a clear progress in language (especially a less known one like Slovenian), a lot of time and practice is needed, sometimes years. Job finding is something that will show results over time and in the case of the young participant who found a part-time job it already has. What played the biggest role in her success was actually a stronger focus on the goal of finding a job and stronger confidence.

This brings us back to the initial observation about the improvement in personal skills and attitudes. The workshops showed that allowing the participants to express themselves freely, to improvise and create can really bring out the best in people. This was demonstrated to us several times during the activities, directly through their work and their words but also indirectly through their body language, facial expressions and more.

As a summary we can say that **Creative Fem Power** is a great human-centric concept that can be used as it is constructed now but can also be adapted in length and in the sort of activities – in our case the inclusion of a painting activity proved to be a big success – to address the universal topic of human creativity as a driving force for solving problems and persevering in the face of difficulties. As such the concept can most likely be used with various groups of adults.

10 Conclusion

Confirming a theory during the testing phase can be an exciting and rewarding experience, as it validates all the hard work that has gone into developing the theory. This is particularly true when the theory was created as part of a proposal, as it means that the proposal was well thought out and feasible.

Creative tools can be incredibly useful when working with a specific group, as they allow for flexibility and customization. However, it's important not to stick too strictly to these tools, as they should be used as a starting point for further development during implementation. By being open to new ideas and adjusting the tools as needed, you can create a more effective and engaging workshop for your participants.

This approach can be applied to a wide range of groups, including teenagers and people with a migration background. By tailoring your tools and methods to the specific needs and interests of your participants, you can create a more engaging and effective learning experience.

Finally, it's important to note that the impact of these workshops can be significant. Some of the women who participated were inspired to continue their language learning in other courses or to intensify their job search. By providing valuable skills and motivation, these workshops can help participants to achieve their goals and improve their lives.

Part II: Compendium of creative methods

Introduction

The Creative Fem Power project created curriculums of four workshops for immigrant women to help with self-esteem, language skills, job-seeking and integration: An Explorative workshop, a Language Learning, a Job-seeking and an Affirmative workshop.

This collection of activities is a complementary compendium of some creative methods that can be used to enhance any work done with migrant women and combined with other curriculums. These methods are classified in four categories for which they are most beneficial: Exploration, Language Learning, Job-Seeking and Affirmation.

The Icebreaking exercises are great for new groups, for enhancing group dynamics and for lightening up the mood, energising and motivating between more challenging exercises. The activities for Language Learning support formal language lessons. Creative methods for Job-seeking help build skills and mind-sets that are beneficial for acquiring a job. The exercises for Affirmation can be used to support immigrants' self-confidence and a sense of belonging in a new country to help with the process of integration.

The exercises presented here are mostly based on methods of theatre pedagogy, but with an emphasis on playfulness and creativity, and don't require formal education or special artistic talents. When doing improvisational games, it's important to emphasize that there is no wrong way to do things and no mistakes to be made. In improvisation a mistake is a gift that will only create more opportunities. The activities are supposed to be fun for the participants, so there should never be any pressure to take part. If someone is having reservations, the trainer should make sure not to make a big deal out of it, but rather encourage them to participate with asking questions and offering words of encouragement.

Activities for the explorative workshop:

The sea of rules

Background music, ocean, sea, water, nature sounds (the forest of rules) etc. Everyone's voice will be heard. Everyone thinks in their minds of 3-5 rules that they find important in terms of group building and safety. The rules are written onto sheets. The tags e.g. are placed in a space where you can walk around in the middle of the rule wishes (sheets). Everyone is allowed to mark 3 most important rules of the "rule sea" for themselves, e.g. with a stone, a sea shell, etc. What kinds of rules were obtained, which ones were considered the most important ones? Conversation with the nearest person approx. 5 min. what the rules mean for themselves. If desired, share a few ideas and experiences from the discussions with the whole group. The chosen rules are written down and distributed to the group.

Tips for the trainers

Drama contract / safer space principles. A drama contract is created when the facilitator and the group agree to do something together. When building a drama contract, rules are jointly agreed upon; how you behave in the group, what the practices are and where the boundaries are. This guarantees safety and the opportunity to throw yourself in, have fun and learn. The facilitator must ensure that the rules are implemented along the group's journey and understand that everyone interprets them from their own point of view. The rules created together also give the group the right to intervene in possible conflicts along the way. You can always go back to the rules and you can clarify them. What is important for engaging in a group is that all members of the group are involved in building the drama contract. The drama agreement and the rules are binding and create a safe working environment.

Name game

In a circle everyone in a group says their own name and associates one move with it. Movement can be very simple and abstract, e.g. waving your hand, clapping etc. Everyone repeats the name with the move. Then the next person says their name and attaches to it another movement which everyone repeats. Then repeat the first and second in a row and continue until everyone has done their own. The game can be carried out while sitting or standing and with large or small movements.

Tips for the trainers

This is good for new groups to help learn each others' names. Hearing your name repeated is also a simple way to make people feel seen. This can be varied later, e.g. with speed, and an attempt is always made to remember the next one together. The group always supports each other and works together, if one doesn't remember all the names at first they can follow others.

Magic soap

Helps create excitement, but also with the idea of purifying ourselves so we can interact with others. It also warms up your mind and body.

1. Take a mime/imaginary soap from the center of the circuit. The colour and scent make you feel good, everyone determines it for themselves. Ask the participants to say what their soaps are like (shape, colour, smell). Wash yourself with soap and wash away muscle tension, nervousness, thoughts about doing this wrongly. Wash away embarrassing thoughts or what everybody else thinks, etc.
2. Take water, a bucket, a shower, etc. Rinse the brown-gray foam that has come off us, to the mega drain which sucks everything away.
3. Take a towel and dry the rest. Do it with a rough or soft towel. Now our own body is open to others. Energy flows between us only when we are open. Here we are now, just like this. You are important.

You will receive a soap as a gift. You can dig it out in a suitable situation some time later.

Tips for the trainers

The purpose of this exercise is to remove inhibitions, so it's important that the trainers themselves are feeling open and liberated. This exercise is great as a first activity since you literally are washing away embarrassment.

Positive look at others

What are the obstacles between our communication, things we don't really see and understand in each other? Let's think about what exists between us: e.g. haste, embarrassment, resistance, shyness, maybe they don't like me, I don't want to be too pushy, I have heard things about them... Let's push away these things from between us. While standing in a circle, one by one everyone says what they are pushing away while using mimic expression. When everything is pushed away, everyone looks at everyone with this positive gaze at their own pace, in peace, while sensing how this positive look affects them. There's no need to search for eye contact or stare at someone. We sense and feel in our bodies how and with what energy we are viewed. You will feel good when you get positive gazes.

Tips for the trainers

This activity is similar to magic soap and a natural continuation to it; first you cleanse yourself from things within you bothering you and then you do the same with regard to other people.

Look left, change place

The group forms a circle. Everyone looks to their left and lets their gaze go on in a circle, constantly trying to meet others' eyes. When two people have eye contact, they swap places between themselves. When they are in a "new place" they start to look to the left again etc. People are constantly changing places in a circle and that's the idea. Constant moving and changing. You have to open yourself that it will happen.

How did it feel to face another person's gaze? Smiles, happy expressions, who wouldn't want to be viewed positively? See another person, really! Eye contact and a smile can be a really big major in someone's day and turn the day into something completely new, giving strength. The power of making visible.

Tips for the trainers

This activity continues the theme of positive look. It also creates the feeling of finding and understanding when the eyes meet and both parties know what they are supposed to do without any words.

Circular clapping

The clapping runs in the circle. People form a circle. A patch chain is set in motion so that one claps their hand and the person to their left continues the clap. The leader can change the direction of the chain. This will be done for a while. The tempo of the clap can vary from slow to fast. When this goes well and smoothly, new instructions will be given. Two quick consecutive claps reverse the direction of the clap and the direction of the clap changes.

Tips for the trainers

This activity is good for warming up the body and waking up if the group feels tired or passive. It's actually challenging to do this activity without anyone making mistakes – it is important to embrace those mistakes and have fun. Succeeding requires for everyone to really pay attention to what others in the group are doing and being able to react. Practising this helps to build co-operation.

Bunny, bunny, bunny

The group stands in a circle. Three people form a “rabbit unit”. The middle, or “central rabbit,” raises both hands to both sides of her head and swings the fingers like rabbit ears. The people around the “central rabbit” are “side rabbits” and they raise one hand closest to the “central rabbit” and wiggle their ears. All three shout out loudly “Bunny, bunny, bunny” and wave their hands. The “central rabbit” shifts the turn to another person by making clear eye contact with them and pointing with their outstretched ears at the person of their choice. That person becomes the next “central rabbit”. The persons who are standing on both sides of the new “central rabbit” become new side rabbits. One drops out of the game if she does not react at the right time, if she is an extra side rabbit, if she uses the wrong side rabbit hand etc. When somebody drops out of the game it is paused and the group decides who is the new “central rabbit”. When someone drops out, they are given a roaring applause. This will be continued until there are only two persons left.

Tips for the trainers

This is a similar game to the clapping activity and perfect for energizing the participants. The trainer should make sure that everyone understands the activity before beginning.

Activities for Language Learning:

Favourite words and things I like

The participants say their favourite word in the language they are learning and give a reason why. The words are written down so that everyone can see them and it is made sure that everyone knows what they mean. After gathering the words, you can form some poems using them.

In this game each of the participants says one thing that they like and asks if anyone else feels the same (e.g. "I like cats. Is there anyone else here who likes cats?" - "I like swimming. Is there anyone else here who likes swimming?") and other participants reply with raising their hands. Every subject is used to spark up conversation with additional questions: "Oh you like cats, do you have any?" - "Where do you go for swimming?"

This activity can be continued with simple questions like favourite colour, favourite animal, etc. Even simple questions can bring up deeper answers, like the favourite colour blue, which reminds you of the sky in your home country.

Tips for the trainers

This exercise was developed for a zoom-setting and is easily done remotely if necessary. Even though the questions are really simple, the personal questions give room for self-expression where it's still easy to set your boundaries on what the participants want to share. It helps to create a conversational atmosphere which creates possibilities to rehearse using the language.

Onomatopoetic words

In this activity you start by going through different animal noises in the language being learned by asking the participants if they know what sound each animal makes. It's also fun to compare the animal noises in different languages, especially if the group has people from different countries.

You can later expand onto other onomatopoetic words in the language.

Tips for the trainers

Going through onomatopoetic sounds is very exciting for the lower language group as they are able to make guesses and figure out the right answers even if they didn't know them.

Collaborative poetry, stories and plays

In this activity you write a fold-up poem in pairs, where one person writes a sentence and the first word for the next sentence and another person completes the sentence and gives a first word for the next sentence. The poets get to read their poems to the rest of the group.

You can also make poems as a group effort with everyone saying one word or sentence at a time in turns. This playful way of making poems is great for people who are not so much into poetry and is easy with a low level of language.

This activity can be easily expanded into stories. If you wish to add more improvisational elements, you can act out the story at the same time as it is told: two people are storytellers and two others are actors.

Tips for the trainers

With poetry it's good to emphasise the aspect of being playful with the language and how you can convey thoughts even without perfect grammar, which is very liberating, since grammar rules play a large part in learning a language. Making poems together also removes the pressure of "coming up with a perfect line". Even a very plain sentence can have its meaning flipped completely by the sentence coming after it. If you choose to do the plays, it's good to do some warm-ups beforehand and make sure the participants are up to it.

Accepting and rejecting

Suggestion and answer “no, because” (rejection)

A pair or a group with three persons form a circle. One enthusiastically suggests some common action. The other one always rejects using the words: “no, because“. Pairs are changing their roles all the time.

e.g. “Hey, it’s such a wonderful weather. Let’s go outside.“. Rejection: “NO, BECAUSE I hate being in the sunshine.” The same the other way around, always repeating with new questions and non-given answers. No pressure on questions. How does it feel like to be rejected? How does it affect to your feeling, body or energy?

Suggestion and answer “yes-and” (approving)

One enthusiastically suggests some common action. The other one always approves using the words: “Yes, and ...“

e.g. “Hey, let’s paint that wall.“ - „YES, AND let’s paint the whole house, too.“ And the other one can continue “YES, AND maybe the next house too.“ - “YES, AND every house in the city.“ etc. So the pair will have a conversation which goes on and on. What does it feel like to be approved? How does it affect your feelings, your body or your energy? What about group energy and the energy of the working space?

Tips for the trainers

You always give your own energy. Rejection moves us away from connection, uncertainty and resistance arise: why would I even offer anymore? With this activity it’s important to discuss the purpose of the activity, which is to demonstrate the effects of rejection and acceptance. This leads into the basic rule of improvisation, the “yes, and” -mentality, where you accept the suggestion from the other and add onto it. Don’t try to invent something in your mind in advance, to control or to be the leader. Don’t try to be too intelligent, witty or funny.

Mimic gifts

Mimic definition exercises

In a circle. Quickly experiment with a mime definition which will support future practice. Everyone lifts something from the middle of the circle, using their hands and body expression. Each one does so separately, but all at the same time.

1 Lift something large and very light e. g. a large feather. Everyone determines what it is and puts it down saying verbally out loud "Oh, a large feather." or whatever the thing is. Everything is right!

2 Lift something big and heavy and give the definition out loud

3 Lift something small and light and give the definition out loud

4 Lift something small and heavy. and give the definition out loud

Give and receive mimic gifts/presents

How to influence each other in a positive way? In a circle make pairs or one group with 3 persons. In the middle of the circle there is an endless pile of imaginary gifts.

One is taking a mimic gift from the middle of the circle. Is it big or small, heavy or light? Give a gift to your partner. The recipient is always delighted and happy about a gift, whatever it is. Repetition with always a new gift. Pairs change roles between the gifts.

Doing something together with a mimic gift. When the recipient gets a gift, they suggest that they will do something with it together! And the other says "YES!" and then they do something with it, right there. If the common action starts to fade or is stuck, stop it and take a brand new gift!

Tips for the trainers

These activities are great for learning new vocabulary, since you add kinesthetic learning with the mime. Lower language level students

might need more support with their conversations with some additional questions. It's all right to use a dictionary.

Activities for Job-Seeking:

Concentration

Listen to yourself and to the space around you

Breathing is something that is common to all people. Conscious thinking of and experiencing it makes us sense and respect ourselves and others. It puts us in touch with the world.

1 The facilitator gives impulses. Stand still and relax your shoulders, head and whole body. Breathe in peace as deeply as you want. Place your hands on your abdomen and diaphragm and feel how your breathing moves and affects your body. After this move your entire body from head to legs. Eyes may be closed. The facilitator can choose the movements; they can be for example: Turn your head from side to side. Rotate the shoulders in different directions. Make a rotation of the upper body in different directions so that the hands follow relaxed. Rotate the hips. Rotate the knees. Rotate the ankles. At the end shake your whole body and let the sound come out from the base of your belly.

2 After that, if it is possible, lie on the floor, if not, sit in a chair. Eyes closed. Relax. Breathe. Listen to the sound of your body: your heartbeat, breathing etc. Move a little bit outside of yourself, what do you hear next to you, listen what kind of sounds do the people in the room make, what other sounds are there inside the room? What can you hear outside the room? Sounds of the building, traffic, nature... Stay still for a few minutes. You are part of the world.

Tips for the trainers

This activity is basically meditation, but the purpose in this context is to make the participants more aware of their surroundings to open them up for the rest of the exercises.

Shapes together and same rhythm

Shapes together

Walk in a room/space, no speech. The facilitator gives/shows some shapes (words or pictures or both) that the group must do together. The group can't talk, whisper, moving others, no one organises, no one is a leader. They are jointly responsible for this. The goal is to build an attentive and calm atmosphere. There is no hurry. Shapes could be e. g., a circle, a square, a triangle, a fork and a knife, the numbers 8 or 4, etc. Afterwards groups discuss how it felt. Was it difficult when speech was not allowed? Was there a difference in interaction because of the lack of speech? Finally, a group can try new shapes and they are allowed to use speech. Was it easier at all? What happened to the attentive atmosphere?

Same rhythm

Listening, sensing and finding a common rhythm. It's awesome that we humans have different rhythms, it also sometimes creates challenges to interact and work together. "How can it take so long for them to do things?" or "Why are they in such a hurry again? I'd like to think about it for a little while."

1 Walk at your own speed and rhythm. Exaggerate your own walking style and pace. If you normally walk fast, do it very fast. If you are swinging while walking, swing more! Peek a little at others about how we are different people, which is a good thing.

2 Return to your normal walking pace.

3 Together we can do amazing things. Look for a common rhythm by sensing each other. No one is a leader, do not do rhythm with heels or boots. Someone must drop their own walking pace, someone must raise the pace. It is not that we should be alike, but how we create a common "space" for this group together.

A Once a common rhythm is found, the group starts to speed up the walking pace. No one is leading, it is based on listening and sensing. The facilitator can show when to speed up or slow down by hand or using the image of a volume button. How fast can the group walk at the same pace? How slowly can they walk at the same pace?

B Then the group can test:

Stop walking at the same time

Turn right at the same time

Make a joint jump

Start walking together

Tips for the trainers

With this exercise the participants get to rehearse their co-operational skills.

You can discuss with the group which one felt easier, slow or fast walking. The idea is that the energy that is formed between people is like a safety net. If someone “falls”, the network supports and gives energy. But if those threads aren’t in the net, one can fall through. Wouldn’t it be safe and comfortable to feel and be together like this?

Non-verbal communication

Courage circle, numbers 1-5; non-verbal communication

Think about the numbers 1 to 5. Number 1 is the most shy, silent and uncertain. Number 5 is the most outgoing, loud and confident.

We all have these 5 numbers in ourselves, we are using them in different situations in our lives and stages of life. They are also changing depending on where we are and with whom we communicate.

IMPORTANT: Don't rate numbers on a scale of good-bad or say that one should be "always brave, loud and taking space". It is socially intelligent to be able to change and "play" with your own status/being/self. In each number there is a positive and negative side.

In a circle, everyone acts at the same time. The facilitator gives numbers and instructions like:

1 Closed posture. Protect your chest with your hands and feet turned in. Shy, timid, quiet, small voice almost whispering, avoiding eye contact. Don't take space, give space to others. Don't want to be the centre of attention. This can also be an inner experience, not visible to the outside. Or it can be the feeling before a new or exciting situation. One can also be an observer, a listener, one does not have to try to be anything else. Observe.

2 The body can open a little bit, with hands more to the side. Better posture. Look for eye contact, but it is not very strong. Look around a bit. A small smile and greeting "hello". Voice and breathing still thin. Willingness to interact, but not necessarily willing to take the initiative itself. Ready to go with others together. Give space to others. Observe.

3 Legs in shoulder-width crotch position. Hands at the side, relaxed. Calm eye contact to others. Voice comes deep from the belly: "Hello". Feel comfortable. Neutral face expression. Ready to take space but also to give it to others.

4 Body open, weight on one hip. Hands can move and explain. Louder voice. Show varieties of expression and emotions. Strong eye contact. Listen, but wait for your turn to speak, sometimes a little bit too enthusiastic. Gives nice energy to others but can take too much space with their own strong expressions.

5 Take space, moving. Strong body expressions. Loud voice, speaking on top of others. Repeat the stories of others as if they were their own. Doesn't sense the space and others' emotions or reads them wrongly. Wants to control and to be right. Also gives energy and courage to other people: "Let's do it".

Playing with caricature characters

The group can also play with numbers using caricature characters. Very over the top stereotypes, e. g. a raging leader (king/queen etc.) or a very submissive servant.

Playing with meetings between different kinds of caricature characters

Everyone chooses their own number, don't tell the others. What is the place? It could be a library, a shop etc. All characters (numbers) go to that place and see what happens: meetings and conversations.

Tips for the trainers

Based on these exercises, you can practice a job interview situation and all kinds of encounters in normal life. What is the status and role you take on in a job interview? How about your co-workers?

Activities for Affirmation:

Creating your Superhero

This is a very simple exercise, where you ask the participants to create their own Superhero-character who has the power to give anything they want to the world. The participants are asked to use props/costumes to find inspiration and then introduce themselves to the group by telling them their Superhero-name and what it is they are about to give to the world.

Tips for the trainers

Using costumes and props and a character it's easier for participants to express their wishes and what it is they actually wish to bring into the world – usually the qualities we admire the most already exist within ourselves but aren't necessarily expressed or fully developed.

Statue techniques

Photographer

Divide into pairs and name the persons A and B. One of the pairs, A, takes B by the hand and rotates them around. A releases their grip and B stays in the position they got to when the movement stopped. A looks at and observes B's position. A describes what they see, what the posture says, what the posture indicates. After that, the tasks are changed. If desired, the task can also be done with only one pair rotating each other and the whole group discuss what the position says.

Still statue

The group forms a still image (statue) of the issue physically, without any words. Strong expression in the body. A picture can be something done by an individual or a group (half of the group or smaller groups). The image shares alternative perspectives on the situation / emotion.

"I will give you a word/theme to explore. Your job is to create a still statue that represents possible experience of the topic. It can be your own experience or a more commonly known one."

Topics for the statues are e.g. joy, sorrow, hate, envy, love, freedom, enthusiasm, home, loss, new beginning, hope etc.

Once statues are made, choose a way to look at the images. If you have divided the group, one half watches the others watching and share what they see in the picture.

"I see big smiles on faces. The body is open, the hands are open wide, persons look at each other, they are turned towards each other, it seems that they will soon be hugging." etc.

Still statue and sound of thought

After looking at the still image and what it expresses, one can hear what the statue feels and thinks at that very moment. The facilitator touches the statue at the shoulder and the statue says a word, a sentence, a sound that exactly fits the position and emotional state of what they think of the situation just then. The purpose of the method is to break free of stereotypes and find an interpretation of the subject together with the individual and the group.

Moving statue, movement and sound

In the moving statue, feelings are represented through movement and sound. Statues are not still anymore and they can repeat words, sentences or sounds expressing their emotions.

Tips for the trainers

The statue-technique can be used in many different variations: you can do mind-maps with the group where the trainer begins the statue with a central thought and participants add to it. A good example of this kind of mind-map statue with immigrants is to do statues of the country they have immigrated into – maybe one statue with positive things and another with negative things.