



“STORIES OF A POSSIBLE EUROPE”

Panels of citizens working on the theme of cultural dialogue through story telling methods

Europe for Citizens Programme - European Union

www.possible-europe.eu

Methodological report



Introduction

In this report we have inserted the following contents:

- The general methodology of the project;
- Some of the specific methodologies concerning the narrative methods.

All those methods are available on the web site of the project European Memories (<http://www.europeanmemories.eu/Methodology/Narration-methodologies-used-in-the-project>), and others are going to be uploaded, as contribute to the creation of an “open source” methodological space concerning autobiographical methodologies and active citizenship.

The project coordinator

Andrea Ciantar

Stories of a Possible Europe

Citizen Panels working on the theme of Intercultural Dialogue, through Cooperative and Autobiographical Methods.

Life stories and autobiographies are very important to human knowledge. Some of these stories tell us about experiences and meanings useful for broadening our understanding of the world. Some of them show us new directions and new possibilities...

The aim of the citizen panel on “Stories of a Possible Europe” is to work on the theme of intercultural dialogue in Europe, through cooperative and autobiographical methods.

The particularity of this project

The particularity of the work methodology of this panel is that it takes as its starting point the telling of stories by European citizens - both as individuals and as collective groups – as a form of participation and interaction in “*constructing an ever closer Europe*”.

From our perspective, telling the life-stories of people is a way to explore and make known the different cultures which make up Europe, a contribution to a possible Europe “*united in, and enriched through its cultural diversity*”; moreover the stories can contribute to the knowledge of the values and representations which are the basis for building a sense of European identity. The storytelling method – as a form of active citizenship – in our view represents an effective bottom-up process, for building knowledge closer to the real experiences of European citizens.

The theme: intercultural dialogue in Europe...

The citizen panel on “Stories of a Possible Europe”, will focalize its attention on intercultural dialogue in particular, within the context of an increasingly multicultural European Union. Specific themes will be:

- “Experiences”: European citizens’ personal experiences of intercultural dialogue;
- “Know-how and methods”: experiences of projects in promoting intercultural dialogue in Europe, in order to gather the contribution of best practices;
- “Women”: the role of women from every European nation in promoting cultural dialogue in Europe.

The panel is thus based on the principle that through stories European citizens can contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge and practices for building a possible Europe of intercultural dialogue. To this end, the groups, by learning from the use of storytelling and group investigation methodologies (a cooperative method here applied to participation) will become real citizen **nuclei** of research, gathering **information** and **proposals** capable of gleaning the multiple **experiences** and **needs** of their local area or nation in relation to the themes being addressed.

The work of the panel is also a contribution to a world-oriented Europe, since telling stories of intercultural dialogue necessarily means narrating relations between Europe and the rest of the world, in the different possible ways, including above all the important role Europe can have with regard to the poorer or developing countries.

Phases in the panel's work

Phase 1: The telling of experiences relating to the above-mentioned themes will be realized both in the first person by panel participants (by means of autobiographical writing workshops) and through interviews and life stories of others gathered by participants after specific training in this regard.

Stories will also be gathered through the European autobiographical competition "Telling Europe". This is a tool of wide dissemination and participation already experimented with in another European project (Telling Europe, LLP-Grundtvig 2 programme, winner of the 2005 EAEA Award 2005 for the best gr2 project in active citizenship), which in this second edition will be directed particularly to the themes of intercultural dialogue. The competition makes it possible to significantly extend the impact of the project as well as permit the involvement of other countries in addition to those of the partners, in the different languages which the partner groups can deal with (English, German, French, Italian, Castilian, Catalan, Bulgarian, Russian)

The stories can be told by using other forms of expression as well, such as **video narration** and **photo narration**, thus also taking advantage of the various opportunities offered by digital narration.

Phase 2: Once the stories are collected, the subsequent important aspect of the panel's work is to facilitate the emergence of knowledge and proposals from the experiences narrated. The standpoints from which the stories can be exploited, such as "Emerging themes" or "Useful Questions" for "extracting" meaning and information contained in them, will be defined by the groups. For example – to give an idea of what is meant – emerging themes might include:

- Types of personal experiences of intercultural dialogue on the part of citizens;
- Types of successful projects in the field of intercultural dialogue;
- The way in which problems and issues of intercultural dialogue are expressed in the concrete experiences of daily life in the different European countries and contexts;
- The multiplicity of meanings in work done in the intercultural field in Europe;
- Useful ideas and suggestions for administrators and actors making up civil society.
- Etc., etc....

In this phase communication between the different groups of citizens in the different European countries involved is particularly important. This process will be encouraged through the net by working tools such as the creation of a wiki, where the various groups can gradually build up their analyses and discussions, and a blog for each group.

Important in this early phase as well will be the participation of language students, who will be able to translate the intermediate documents produced which will be necessary to mutual knowledge and discussion.

Phase 3: In this phase the groups have the task of creating simple products to be disseminated in order to return and put back into circulation the knowledge and interpretations proposed to reach and involve both citizens and institutional representatives both at local and European level. Such products will consist essentially in re-elaborating and interpreting the story material created by the citizens, and will therefore have the same forms of expressions. We may thus have reports in the form of:

- texts;
- photographs;
- videos.

The different forms will expand the communicative potential of the products created. These reports will be developed on two levels:

- local and national levels of the different countries involved;
- a European level, arising from the interpolation of the local and national levels.

An additional report will describe the work done by the panel itself and the methodology adopted, in order to make it possible to transfer the experience to other groups of citizens who will be able to reproduce it. The website of the project will showcase all the material produced.

Language students will also be able to participate in this phase of the work with the translation of the material produced.

It is important to note how the methodology adopted makes it possible for the participants to at the same time develop and express both their creativity and social skills. To this end, the work within the groups will be carried out – in addition to the autobiographical methodologies – through cooperative methodologies, including above all the Group Investigation method.

This method, which belongs to the family of cooperative methods, makes it possible for the groups of citizens to realize research activities on specific themes, thanks to the methodological support of teachers and group leaders; group investigation, in fact, includes both guidance in the use of research methods (as do the life storytelling method and the background, archival and bibliographical research activities) and guidance in the group processes (development of social skills such as listening, communicative capacity, the ability to mediate, to cooperate within a group, etc...). The group investigation method is thus an active and participative way of providing information and opinion building.

In brief, the methodologies adopted in our view together furnish the best response to the aims of the project insofar as:

- this is a bottom-up method, thanks to the comprehensive understanding of concrete reality and the communicative power which stories have;
- these methodologies make it possible to develop social skills as indispensable competences for the development of active citizenship;

the methodologies adopted together develop individual creativity, which is put at the service of the common good.



Narration methodologies used in the project

"Topography"

Contents: Exploring and investigating our life; writing about a trip, which had a big influence on it.

[Workshop Topography 270409-1.pdf](#) 62.30 kB

[The Golden Cloverleaf](#)

- The Golden Cloverleaf ("Das goldene Kleeblatt")
Photo - documentation about a Theater - project in Berlin between April 28th and May 8th 2009.

Information sheet (in German)

[NB Schöneberg - Kleeblatt.pdf](#) 175.05 kB

Powerpoint Presentation is here:

[Theater der Erfahrung Doku.pdf](#) 7.53 MB

[The story of my name...](#)

[Vi racconto il mio nome.doc](#) 63.00 kB

[Communication beyond Language](#)

Five new forms of immediate communication have been proposed for "Telling Europe". Purpose is to allow for artful and stimulating actions beyond borders, partly playful and transgressing the language barrier by articulation impressions without language.

[The role of the reading commission](#)

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The commission is formed by a group of 12/14 local people

Each group differs by age, sex, experience, education

They are not scholars and or even passionate novel readers. They are not anthropological or historical experts, they are only *ordinary readers* who read the stories of ordinary people

The reading commission has developed its own method of text analysis by using experience, passion, involvement, research and focus on human beings. It means entering into a person's life through his writings, feeling a strong empathy with hundreds and hundreds of life stories





[Fondazione Archivio Diaristico Nazionale-1.ppt](#) 276.50 kB



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