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R:EACH
Research and Education Institute



European Fair Skills

**Exchanging good practice in strengthening
community-embedded prevention of group focused enmity,
hate crime and violent right-wing extremism**

■ Introduction

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This brochure is published as a conclusion of the long-term international project European Fair Skills, funded by the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Program of the European Union and the Federal Agency of Civic Education, Germany, in which REACH – Research and Education Institute was one of the partner organizations. In addition to international and national expert's discussions on know-how and experience exchange between stakeholders to provide policy and expert support for the EFS implementation, several different pilot trainings and workshops took place in Bratislava and in Banská Bystrica during 2016. This includes pilot youth cultural workshops with different target groups, such as high school students, young music artists or youth and social workers who learned new methods of youth work in the field of prevention of group hatred or (aggressive) polarization and deradicalization and therefore can further act as multipliers of the EFS methodology. In this brochure, all aforementioned workshops and trainings are introduced, representing model activities that are replicable also in different regions and together form the repertory of the European Fair Skills methodology.



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European Fair Skills

■ Description of the project

■ European Fair Skills is a project organized jointly by the German non-governmental organization Cultures Interactive (project coordinator) and three non-governmental organizations from Central Europe (project partners): REACH Research and Education Institute (Slovakia), Ratolest (Czech Republic) and Kon-tiki (Hungary). The project was co-funded by the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Program of the European Union and the Federal Agency of Civic Education, Germany.

In the last eight years, CI has developed and tested many target group specific (model) project approaches and concepts as well as various methods of community-oriented prevention work. Whether it be workshops with young people, further training for education professionals or advising and coaching local civil society, political actors or administration, to act long term and sustainably against group-focused enmity, hate crime and violence motivated by right-wing extremism, a holistic community approach as well as offers tailored to different stakeholders are required.

The European Fair Skills project was developed as a response to the current situation in the Central European region. During their involvement with the European Commission's Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), CI encountered many prevention work practitioners, particularly those active in the fields of right-wing extremism and religious fundamentalism. It was made clear that, until now, prevention work has been particularly underdeveloped in Central and East European countries. It has been also observed that discriminatory attitudes in certain parts of the society have strongly taken hold in these countries, which is made apparent by organized militant right-wing groups, anti-Semitic rhetoric, attacks motivated by homophobia or attacks on Roma settlements. The goal of the joint European Fair Skills project is therefore to test transferring approaches for community-oriented and target group specific prevention work which have proven effective in Germany to different national contexts of Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

■ Fair Skills Method

The Fair Skills approach, as developed and defined by Cultures Interactive, is based on several principles:

- Non-formal civic education. This segment includes educational activities about civic society, human rights, mediation and conflict transformation and the acquisition of communication soft skills leading to the strengthening of civic responsibility.
- Youth cultural workshops. An interactive form of informal education is a crucial element, using youth subcultures via which the civic education topics are communicated and explained to the youngsters, while at the same time inspiring them to spend their free time in a meaningful way.
- Group work. The last element includes the self-awareness group work on reflection and grievances, employing the so-called „narrative approach” and inspiring young people to become peer facilitators and to become active in their community.

In each of the participating countries, a wide range of diverse actions were implemented, all aimed at different audiences and pursued aims:

- Fair Skills trainings: training multipliers to implement a civil society youth culture work approach which also conducts on-site training with at-risk adolescents;
- Local Derad trainings: further training aimed at social workers, educators and youth culture stakeholders for primary and secondary prevention work with youth;
- Round Table discussions: a regional network for right-wing extremist prevention with local stakeholders from the government, administration, civil society, social work, schools, etc., enhancing the exchange of knowledge and experiences on the national level.

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Activities

Local Derad Training

April 27–28, 2016 in Bratislava

Local Derad trainings introduced an integrated approach to professionally deal with the phenomenon of right-wing extremism in youth work, youth welfare and communities. This approach was developed from 2011 to 2014 as part of a model project by Cultures Interactive in Germany in cooperation with social workers and youth clubs and has been tested nationwide. The participants of the Local Derad Training in Bratislava made themselves familiar with the intervention plan which is the central tool of the training, and learned to apply it with respect to their working contexts and goals.

Representatives of the Slovak NGO community, predominantly from Bratislava and Banská Bystrica, attended the Local Derad training with the purpose of discussing this integrated approach of community oriented prevention work in order to act long term and sustainably against group-focused enmity, hate crime and violence motivated by right-wing extremism.

The structure of the Local Derad training covered both informative as well as interactive segments. Firstly, a short semi-structured discussion took place among the participants, followed by a picture game, where participants together and with the help of visuals summarize in a non-lecture way the main features of right-wing extremism in Slovakia as well as the most crucial challenges society is currently facing, thereby also reflecting their own professional experiences in prevention and deradicalization work. The most substantial part of the workshop was dedicated to group work and to testing the specific phases of the intervention methods, such as role play or situation analysis, by participants themselves. The Local Derad Training thus becomes a unique opportunity to try the methods used in youth work by youth workers themselves and enables them to react better in the future. Additionally, several other interesting and specific topics were covered during the training, such as the CI project on the gender aspect within the issue of right-wing extremism, thus inciting the discussion on the topic that is largely under-researched in Slovakia.





■ **Train-the-Trainers Trainings**

September 18–19, 2015, in Brno and April 29–30, 2016 in Bratislava

■ The main aim of the Train-the-Trainer trainings was to focus specifically on the Fair Skills methodology using the youth cultural approach developed by Cultures Interactive, and to deliver it to selected trainers from the NGO communities of Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Another aim was to motivate them to develop their own plan on how the methodology could be used in their own work with youngsters. Trainings were led by facilitators of Cultures Interactive.

The training consisted mainly of demonstrations of specific methods and exercises that could be used in the youth work and that form the integrated methodology of Fair Skills, presented by trainers of Cultures Interactive. Participants got a chance to test the methods on themselves and to discuss their applicability in their home context and their everyday work. Moreover, given the international context of the project, it was also a unique opportunity to compare professional experiences among each other, within the national group and between all four participating countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Germany – at the same time.

Another important element of the Train-the-Trainer workshops was the approach of youth-cultural social intervention, which combines elements of civic education/pedagogical anti-bias training, psychologically based open-process group work, and peer-learning in youth-cultural activities. Therefore, participants had also a chance to see examples of such activities in practice, for instance a DJ/hip-hop sub-cultural workshop, led by a CI trainer and a DJ, which includes hip-hop-related visuals or a DJ-set as a means to attract youngsters and engage them in a discussion on civic educational topics.

Train-the-Trainer Workshop

in Banská Bystrica, September 30 – October 2, 2016

The Train-the-Trainer workshop that was organized in Banská Bystrica represents an added interphase between learning the EFS methodology and its adjustment to the Slovak context. It was led by trainers trained with the support of practitioners from CI in Germany, with the aim to disseminate and further develop the methodology and to confront it with practical experiences by youth and social workers as well as civic educators from different regions of Slovakia. The workshop was organized in Banská Bystrica for various organizational and logistic reasons (especially because of the location and accessibility), but also for a more symbolic reason – the scope of and the support for right-wing extremist movements and ideologies and behaviors of group hatred and hate crime observable throughout the region.

The workshop had three main elements. Firstly, the introduction of the European Fair Skills approach and the principle of interconnecting civic education and youth cultures as a means of establishing dialogue with youngsters. The main idea is to inspire youth workers to implement parts of the methods in their own work and to engage in a more interactive method of youth work, using their language and preferred means of spending time in order to use this as an advantage when trying to communicate civic educational ideas to them. Secondly, more attention was dedicated to certain specific methods that proved to be the most helpful and useful for the work of youth workers in Slovakia, such as the so-called narrative method, i.e. a method of discussion with vulnerable youngsters/youth at risk, which is based on using emotions and self-projection to deal with certain situations. Thirdly, participants were also given a chance to experience the EFS workshop for themselves, with a session devoted specifically to working with camera, pictures and video, and their applicability in the civic education process.





■ Youth Cultural Workshop (Hip-Hop)

October 14, 2016, in Bratislava

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The pilot youth cultural “hip-hop” workshop was organized to test the sub-cultural training model in practice under Slovak conditions, which in many ways differ from those in Germany. The workshop took place on October 14th in the Cultural Center Lúky in Petržalka, one of the districts of Bratislava. This place was chosen mainly for symbolic reasons, since it is considered to be the “cradle” of Slovak hip-hop in 90’s. The main aim was to target youth workers from Bratislava and surrounding areas who are interested to see how hip-hop and DJs could be used as a part of civic education. The target groups of the workshop were not only youth and social workers, but also young people who are not trained in the field of civic education or youth work, but have some impact on youngsters via their cultural activities, such as music.

The event had two main elements. The first part of the workshop was comprised of sessions focusing on the methods of conducting civic education via youth culture-related topics. In the case of hip-hop, such topics would include famous artists as well as hip-hop songs or albums from both the Slovak and international music scene. Following this, the second part covered an even more important topic, namely the opportunities that young artists have in approaching young people and delivering important messages, i.e. via the lyrics of their songs. The last part of the youth cultural workshop was dedicated to a thematic youth cultural activity that represents a crucial element of the EFS workshops, i.e. a competition to build a DJ controller, the school of scratch and the hip-hop battle. At the end of the day of the workshop in Bratislava, participants performed some of their songs during a concert in the premises of the cultural center, which was open to the public.

■ Youth Cultural Workshop (Roma culture)

February 27 – March 2, 2017, in Bratislava

The model youth cultural workshop aimed at high school students took place at the end of February 2017 at the Gymnasium of Jur Hronec in Bratislava and its main aim was to raise the interest of students with regard to the topics of prejudice, stereotypes and the problem of building barriers between different groups of people – between “us” and “them”. Moreover, it also aimed to promote the development of critical thinking and reasoning as well as to create space for advancing individual leadership skills. The four-day long workshop, which also served as a pilot project for future action with the possibility of being replicated at other high schools across Slovakia, was led by Slovak EFS trainers. It combined several goals:

- a. raising awareness and giving information to students about specific topics related to the development of prejudice and stereotypes and their effect on the social and political system of the state through interactive lectures and discussions with experts in the field;
- b. presentations of existing, mostly local and not widely known positive initiatives and experiences of engaged people in the field with the goal to raise awareness about activities of the non-governmental sector with special attention devoted to features that can inspire those who attend in their own civic engagement;
- c. development of leadership skills and reasoning skills using EFS methods of informal education, i.e. connecting civic education with youth cultures and using it to spread important messages in a way that is more fun and approachable for young people;
- d. making use of the unique opportunity to discuss the documentary “Ida’s Idea” about the work with Roma children from poor families living in Roma settlements all over Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and how the elements of Roma music and culture are used in this activity.





■ Round Tables

September 14, 2015, and November 28, 2016, in Bratislava

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Round Tables were organized at the beginning and at the end of the project to initiate a discussion about the goals and the process of implementing the EFS project with different stakeholders in Slovakia, engage them in particular phases of the EFS project and to discuss the potential challenges with regard to their own experiences and lessons learned while working with the youths in their respective regions. During semi-structured discussions facilitated by EFS trainers, participants were targeted in a way to make sure that different organizations and institutions working in the field of prevention and countering extremism and radicalization were included, allowing the participants to gain as diverse perceptions on the issue as possible and to gather observations and lessons learned, thereby supporting the EFS implementation process in Slovakia.

The Round Table discussions were covering three main areas. Firstly, a discussion about the current situation and the most recent incidents related to increasing public support for right-wing extremist ideologies, thus gathering as many individual perceptions and stories as possible from the national and regional levels, in order to compare them to the situations in Germany, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Secondly, the conclusions and challenges emerging during the implementation period of European Fair Skills in Slovakia were discussed, utilizing the presence of a diverse group of stakeholders and their diverse professional and expert experiences.

Thirdly, at the end of the project, the topic of EXIT programs was introduced as one of the possible follow-ups to the EFS activities, since EXIT programs have not been implemented in Slovakia yet. With representatives of EXIT organizations from Germany present, discussions also covered an overview of the EXIT programs, their principles and characteristics, good as well as bad practices and lessons to be learned from for potential future implementations of EXIT programs in Slovakia. The discussions also gave rise to important recommendations for Slovakia regarding this matter, which, in our opinion, helped lay the groundwork for further professional discourse on EXIT strategies in the context of the Slovak republic in the upcoming months and years.

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Trainer's evaluations



■ **Zuzana Szabóová**

■ My first contact with Cultures Interactive and their European Fair Skills approach was during the time when the media outlets were full of reports on the refugee crisis. The reactions by common people who did not hesitate to use social networks to wish death to other people (in their eyes „inhuman monsters, coming here to rape our white women“), convinced me that human rights education has never been needed as much as it is now. In the flood of disinformation, half-truths and mistrust in the current political establishment, it is easy to be driven by fear and frustration. That's the reason why the opportunity to attend the first EFS training came at the right time. Even though it was not entirely clear to me what European Fair Skills will be about, I had some basic information about the organizations and the aims they are dedicated to. For these reasons I decided not only to attend the first training, but also to be involved in European Fair Skills Project until its end.

I consider the overall approach as well as combining informal human rights education with subcultures to be the biggest asset of the training. I believe this to be a “youth friendly” way of discussing challenging topics such as radicalization, discrimination, xenophobia or racism. I appreciate that we learned the principles of the so-called “narrative approach”, which many participants were using instinctively, but without any systematic methodology. I think that knowing the rules of this approach will be reflected in our work with pupils and students, especially with regard to the quality of a polarized debate during school workshops.

I also believe that if it was much clearer what EFS is about, it would be easier to get more people to cooperate. For us trainers, it was sometimes very difficult to explain what EFS really is about and wherein exactly its innovative approach lies. However, the more we were working in the project, the clearer it became. It is also difficult to find people in Slovakia who would want to be actively engaged in human rights education and are members of some subculture at the same time. Besides, not a very high number of young people become actively engaged in the activities of radical movements. That is why, for them, EFS activities are not an alternative way to spend their free time, but mostly preventive in nature – via activities which force them to think about other ways of how to express their dissatisfaction than hate speech. But I also think that EFS activities are easily customizable with respect to the conditions of each respective country, which is exactly why they are such a useful tool of informal education.



■ ■ **Radoslav Sloboda**

It was a crazy ride – all my experiences with the EFS project. One never knows what to expect and after experiencing it, I can find only words of praise. I think it is because so many great people were involved, this being the first thing I would like to highlight. My respect goes out to the people from the REACH Institute and Cultures Interactive, and I hope that our cooperation will continue further. There are things that both organizations brought to Slovakia – approaches, recommendations, experiences and new perspectives on topics that were missing in our country. This was a huge help for me – and to put it simply, much of this work is about the respect you have to earn from the group that you work with, from teacher that you have to persuade to give you time and

space during their lecture, and last but not least from the donor that provides funding for your activities. In all these cases, the fact that we are working with CI approaches is a substantial advantage and thanks to that it will be easier for us to gain the necessary respect and to work better. I would also like to appreciate the excellent catering during the workshops, the very pleasant networking that followed the workshops as well as the great Cultures Interactive lecturers, especially Harald and his most profound inputs. It was an excellent experience, keep up the good work!



■ ■ **Michal Haman**

In Slovakia, much has been recently said about extremism and the necessity to fight it. Unfortunately, the discussion has often turned into some kind of cliché driven by politicians, journalists and even intellectuals. In my opinion, it is hard to fight extremism and it should not even be our goal. The real aim should be prevention and the offering of alternatives to extremist ideologies, especially when working with young people. The fact is that a part of the young generation is attracted to radical ideas and it has always been this way. However, it is necessary to work with these people over the long term and Cultures Interactive showed us one of the ways how to achieve that.

Personally, I am an active member of the hip-hop community in Bratislava since high school. I also went through a period of writing more radical lyrics full of complaining about politicians in the past and as far as I can see, this is still very popular among young people – to constantly complain about something. But using hip-hop we can also expand people's horizons, even towards exploring history and a number of other important issues. The EFS project helped me to discover and develop this view of the hip-hop subculture by giving me the

opportunity to acquire new skills as a lecturer and also to lead workshops where we had the chance to introduce hip-hop to youth workers and also to young people themselves. The EFS project inspired me a great deal with regard to what can and could be done in this field. I presented the approach of mixing hip-hop and civic education during a seminar for teachers, where the topic received significant attention. Moreover, I was also invited to lead the workshop on this topic at the largest teacher conference in Slovakia.



■ **Barbora Bodnárová**

The first time I was introduced to the ESF methodology, I did not know what to expect. I was not involved in work with youngsters before, but I wanted to explore it after some experiences working with young leaders. Taking part in all the various events that the REACH Institute prepared amazed me. The idea behind the approach opened up new horizons for me. Although I already had some experience the field of culture, I see many ways of how the EFS methodology can be used to fight radicalization and extremism, and I look forward to using the methods I have learned in my work. Combining civic education with subcultures is a great idea.



■ **About us**

■ The REACH Research and Education Institute is a newly established independent non-governmental organization based in Bratislava, Slovakia, focusing on issues of extremism, radicalization of public opinion and the formulation of deradicalization strategies.

■ The REACH Research and Education Institute is a common project founded by a group of young, motivated researchers and analysts with wide experience from academia and the non-governmental sector. We share a vision of creating a “bridge” between academia and research institutions, providing knowledge and methodology on the one hand, and the civil society and policy-makers, i.e. the actors that operate in the field on the other. With extensive experience from various organizational frameworks and fields of research, we are dedicated to strengthen the quality of professional discourse in Slovakia and address the most challenging issues through a proper methodological and evaluation-based approach. Our mission includes the establishment of a well-respected “think-and-do tank”, operating in close partnership with a wide range of stakeholders in the Slovak society in order to formulate the best quality responses to the challenges our society faces today.

■ **Our mission**

■ The main aims of the REACH Institute are:

- to strengthen the democratization of political institutions with focus on social issues;
- to strengthen the evidence and research based approach and its utilization in addressing the most challenging issues of society;
- to strengthen the cross-sectoral cooperation and relations between research institutions, academia, civil society (especially the grass-root practitioners) and policy-makers;
- to contribute to the development of solutions and responses to major intra-societal challenges in the Slovak Republic.

■ **Our topics**

■ The main research topics of the REACH Research and Education Institute include:

- intercultural and intrasocietal relations in the Slovak society;
- radicalization of public opinion and formulation of counter-extremist strategies;
- research of growing support for right-wing extremist ideas and movements;
- nationalism and minorities;
- education policies;
- media and the objectivity of media outlets.

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**Project
partners**

Project Coordinator: Cultures Interactive is a Berlin-based NGO that was founded in 2005 and works nationwide and internationally on various projects and networks. CI develops and implements strategies and methods which enable effective work in the field of preventing phenomena of group focused hate, right-wing extremist and inhuman attitudes amongst youth. Additionally, the organization offers further education / trainings for pedagogues and multipliers working with youth within a community as well as counseling and coaching of communities.



Slovak Project Partner: Center for Community Organizing (CKO) is a non-governmental organization that has carried on its programs in Slovakia since 1999. The organization is guided by a small staff of trained organizers and professionals based in central Slovakia – in the city of Banská Bystrica. CKO provides assistance to ordinary citizens to better ensure that they become a part of the decision making of local governments. CKO wants to contribute to changing Slovak society into a society of active citizens in which the “voice of the people” is asked for and respected. The organization has helped citizens enter public life by listening to the issues in their communities, and teaching them how to create strategies and act to bring about necessary changes in their communities. More recently, CKO has been focusing on working with minorities to ensure their voices and requests are being heard. In 2014, CKO helped to establish the Not In Our Town (NIOT) platform as a response to the election of a local neo-Nazi to head the regional government. Together with leaders from different segments (municipality, business, NGO’s, universities) NIOT is fighting against extremism and radicalization in the region of Banská Bystrica by organizing public discussions and implementing a systematic and professional agenda supporting tolerance, anti-discrimination and basic human rights.



Ratolest Brno, z.s. is a non-profit, non-governmental organization providing services for children, youth and families. Its mission is to help socially disadvantaged children, young people and families resolve their adverse life situations, or prevent such circumstances. By offering equal opportunities to its clients, the organization aims at improving their quality of life as well as successfully (re)integrating them into society. Ratolest Brno gives children a chance to grow up in functional families and supports young people who veered off course. Professional care to children and young people mostly growing up in dysfunctional families is provided for free. Furthermore, Ratolest Brno plays an important role in the strategical and methodical area of social services in the region and on the national level.



The Kontiki vocational training Ltd. (limited company) is a public benefit non-profit organization located in Budapest, Hungary. Kontiki Ltd. runs a private second chance type of vocational education school with about 300 15–25 years old students, dealing with special educational needs and drop-outs. Their work aims at supporting these students to re-enter society and the school system by providing alternative forms of education and widening their horizons with various sensibilisation activities as well as national and international projects. The school staff consists of various professions, based on the belief of the organization that people from different professional backgrounds complement and inspire each other and create extra value. Among the founders and co-workers are teachers, special education teachers, developmental teachers, social specialists, economists, information specialists, jurists, environmentalists, anthropologists, psychologists, artists, mediators, mental health experts, supervisors, office leaders, administrators, teachers of vocational training, engineers, acrobats, communication experts, guidance experts, animators and documentary film makers. Some are more focused on the work with adolescents, others are working with adults and the families of the adolescents.



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