

# PreQual

International  
prequalification for  
migrant women  
entering into the  
health and care sector

PreQual basics

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# PreQual Basics

## Preface

*Leading the way, questioning*

Attention! In your hands is a highly charged, epistemological and anthropological manifest that reaches beyond the confines of hegemonic knowledge production!

“PreQual has developed a measure capable of intervening in the extremely current sociopolitical debate on care, migration and labor, and provides a solution-oriented approach for the target group, migrant women.”<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the PreQual measures have not been “refashioned” as part of the knowledge-based economy geared toward the production of (economically) exploitable forms of knowledge and human capital. It was not the aim of PreQual to contribute to transforming Europe into the world’s largest and most dynamic market of knowledge. PreQual was not geared toward redefining education as a commodity or to a market-oriented control of education (or adult education) founded on economic and commercialization interests.

The main focus of PreQual is to provide an educational program that forges a link between the restructuring of everyday life in society and the emancipatory capacity of migrant women within Europe to act as subjects within this process. “The educational measures respond to the labor market policies in an emancipatory manner, setting awareness processes in motion and providing a framework for the course participants to explore and practice different ways of acting as a subject within society. Furthermore, PreQual aims to create a common ground for all participants (including the teachers) to develop strategies for changing one’s own situation as well as the conditions within the general labor

<sup>1</sup> the present publication, last chapter

market.”<sup>2</sup>

According to Paulo Freire, the incapacity to act, both for individuals and groups, is an effect of hegemonic restrictions that narrow one’s scope of action. This also places confines on one’s awareness, “as poverty, oppression and exploitation compel people to enact strategies of, and create ways of, thinking that are simply geared toward survival. This results in individuals becoming passive, patient sufferers or opportunistic followers and co-perpetrators of oppression and exploitation. These unjust, exploitative social conditions thus propel individuals into a desperate cycle where they must exert tremendous amounts of energy just to survive and unquestioningly live according to pre-dictated life concepts.”<sup>3</sup>

Realizing this connection is the only way to reinstate the individual’s capacity to take action. However, no individual subject is capable of this as long as she or he is trying to move forward alone and isolated from others. The women who took part in PreQual have actually experienced that only within a collective. Only together with people affected by the same circumstances is it possible for them as an individual to learn to liberate their minds, create awareness for their situation and build up the capacity to take action themselves. For this reason, developing the subject’s capacity to take action is inherently political from the very beginning.

In this light, the PreQual project has never represented an “objective” form of education or a neutral position. Work in education is never objective. It can either initiate or perpetuate a state of dependency for those involved, or it can contribute to their liberation.

The educational practices in PreQual can be described as entailing an “invisibile, human responsibility, which is irrevocably the political responsibility of pedagogy within societies that are ruled by social injustice. This responsibility is to rekindle hope among socially disadvantaged persons, to enable access to education to the oppressed, and with a means that will enable them to forge their own path that leads them to reinstate themselves as the subjects of their own lives.”<sup>4</sup>

PreQual is a process-oriented project that is not to be measured in terms of neo-liberal paradigms. What sets PreQual apart is the fact that the actors imagine and ask many more questions than they have or know the answers to. Asking questions is a core element of educational-political methodology. This also reflects the process-oriented praxis of maiz, where the path leading to change can only be developed by going down it, together—not by considering it a path that is unknown or has not yet been traveled. We lead the way, questioning.

2 *the present publication, chapter 5 – Educational Measure PreQual*

3 *See: Figueroa, Dimas: Aufklärungsphilosophie als Utopie der Befreiung in Lateinamerika. Befreiungstheorien von Paulo Freire und Gustavo Gutiérrez. Frankfurt 1989.*

4 *See: Mergner, Gottfried in “Lernfähigkeit der Subjekte und gesellschaftliche Anpassungsgewalt.” Ausgewählte Schriften Band 2. Thomas Geisen (ed.), 1999, p. 54.*

It is by going down this path that maiz and its partners lead the way. They do not consider themselves the avant-garde, nor do they define the entire “[...] path, but only a few steps. They do not provide a guide, just but one of many routes that lead to tomorrow.”<sup>5</sup>

The actions and words of PreQual and the ethical-political thoughts and actions of the actors are a testimony to the fact that emancipatory change from below is indeed possible. This type of praxis makes waves. In this way, PreQual is also the reception, adaptation and further development of emancipatory impulses. It makes waves as it is “translated” into other realities and fields. What kind of resonance can such projects have within education in this country? Are there educational programs that go beyond servicing an intrinsic, vested interest in Eurocentric and hegemonic frameworks of thought?

A few key aspects of the educational work at maiz that are necessary in creating a sustainability of the PreQual endeavor are: creating an option for those who are excluded and forgotten, the courage to criticize, the subversive smile in times that call for seriousness, the ability to critique oneself and see the irony of one’s own situation, an aspiration to eventually make oneself dispensable, networks based on solidarity, the dialectic connection between action and reflection, the belief in utopias and the conveyance of hope.

“It is not necessary to conquer the world.  
It is more about creating a new world. Through  
us. Today.”<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Tania Araujo<sup>7</sup>

5 *In the words of EZLN, Zócalo Mexico City, 11 March, 2001.*

6 *Sub commander Marcos from mountains in southeast Mexico, Oct. 2007.*

7 *Dr. Tania Araujo is part a third-generation migrant in Brazil and a first-generation migrant in Austria. She is a co-founder of maiz and a “dissident” theologian.*

# 1

## PreQual Support, Qualification and Practice

Within Europe, migrant women predominantly find employment in the service sector—such as cleaning or in the sex industry—as their access is very limited and mostly includes other extremely precarious sectors of the informal labor market. Their situation is not only defined by legal regulations, but also by discursive and economical aspects that are decisive factors in determining their concrete living conditions.<sup>8</sup> Despite, or precisely because of, the lack of social recognition for the work done in the health and care fields, it is currently one of the few areas of qualified labor open to migrant women. The PreQual project was developed by the migrant women self-organization maiz (Linz, Austria) in response to the concrete necessity for support of migrant women in their efforts to enter the field of health and care and other job education programs. PreQual is a project that underlines and enhances a person's existing qualifications and competences, thereby combating the systematic disqualification of migrant women on the labor market. At the same time, PreQual also seeks to initiate a critical debate on migration, on the labor market, on care and on health that considers discussions on gender and racism. This critical, differentiated debate is a way of developing concrete strategies to combat the existing disadvantages.

The PreQual course and international curriculum framework were developed within the context of an international pilot project utilizing the Leonardo da

<sup>8</sup> See: Caixeta, Luzenir: "Jenseits eines simplen Verelendungsdiskurses. Die widersprüchliche Verknüpfung von verstärkter Unterwerfung und erweiterter Autonomie." In: *fields of TRANSFER. MigrantInnen in der Kulturarbeit*. IG Kultur Österreich (ed.) April 2007, pp. 56-58.

Vinci model and was realized in cooperation with international partners from five European countries and with the support of numerous strategic partners from the fields of health, care and social work.

As part of the "PreQual Steps" project, maiz transferred this adult education program to other EU countries and further refined the concept to meet the requirements for applying it internationally. This took place in cooperation with partner organizations from Greece, Spain, Czech Republic and Hungary. As a prequalification measure, PreQual supports migrant women by providing them with qualifications, creating thematic discussions, offering practical experiences and legal counseling, thereby giving them insight into the health care and social systems. The prequalification measure also furnishes participants with extensive information about the possibilities for further educational training and employment in their country of residence, opportunities to gain practical experience on the job (through internships), which is an added advantage for applying to certification programs. In the end, the main goal of PreQual is to facilitate migrant women's entrance into a field that offers secure jobs and further opportunities for working as skilled, qualified employees.

The training course includes several modules that introduce participants to the care field and prepares them for further vocational training. Based on maiz's principles of education that include a focus on gender, discrimination and racism on the labor market, the course offers a structured way of strengthening the position of migrant women within Europe. Furthermore, PreQual strongly contributes to the international network and thematic discussion on health, care, assistance and migration.

## 2

# Care and Migration and its contentious relation to socio- political power relations

“The reality of everyday life eventually turns all people into those who need care; and the social construction of gender relations turns all women into those who provide care.”<sup>9</sup>

When dealing with the health and care, we also enter a topical and differential field that is also a site of considerable social tension. The debate concerning the allocation of activities and responsibilities of the broad field of “care professions” is a response to care workers’ demand for recognition of their work as a social necessity. The aim of this debate was to establish an “understanding of care as a common social and interpersonal responsibility. This is only possible if its socio-political and action-based aspects, which have always been seen as separate, are considered as interlinked. Only then can we develop a ‘culture of care.’”<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the solutions must also take into consideration the new emerging forms of global transfer and develop approaches that go beyond regional or national borders.

PreQual particularly focuses on the professions and respective qualifications that provide people with a chance to find a job on the so-called “primary

labor market.”

An exceptionally interesting point here is that organizations from the “younger” EU member states are also part of the PreQual project partnership. Especially within the western countries, the relations seem quite clear where qualified personnel from outside the western countries migrate to the (neighboring) states that offer higher salaries. The other side is that western care systems are primarily geared toward serving their own economic interests and greatly benefit from bleeding the (neighboring) countries of their lower-salaried, qualified personnel. In 1995, Arlie Hochschild coined the term “care deficit” to designate the growing need for care in the target countries and the poverty in the countries of origin that has led to a global migration of care personnel to wealthier countries.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the history of inequalities and forms of exploitation over the past hundreds of years is now repeating itself in the situation of the caregivers. The following aspects are characteristic of occupations that deal with childcare or care and assistance for sick, dis/abled and elderly persons:

- great deal of time spent, including the common demand to be on call around the clock
- exceptional physical and mental strain
- demand for a great amount of flexibility
- demand for constant learning of new techniques and tasks due to technical advancements or a change in standards—this also assumes a constant availability of resources for attending further education programs
- remarkably low amount of appreciation for one’s work within society
- high percentage of women working in the field
- increased outsourcing of jobs to migrant women within an already predominantly female field

The power relations in society related to care work, particularly gender relations, have largely remained unquestioned and only rarely been viewed in conjunction with the globalization of (precarious) working conditions. These increasingly more precarious working conditions are in effect an outcome of various attempts to restructure production processes in post-Fordist societies.<sup>12</sup> Taking one look at the actual work that migrants do reveals a tendency to make the conflicting connection between increased repression and expanded autonomy within these occupational fields.

9 Brückner, Margit: “Versorgungsarbeit: who cares? Care und neue Arbeitskonzepte (im Beruf)” *Frauenfragen sind Männerfragen sind Geschlechterfragen? 40 Jahre Neue Frauenbewegung, Conference in Bochum 12 – 14 June 2008*. See also: “who cares? - Betreuung und Pflege in Österreich – eine geschlechterkritische Perspektive.” *International Research Conference, Innsbruck, 14 - 15 May 2009*.

10 Brückner, Margit: *In Polis 49*, hess. Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, *Pflegende und sorgende Frauen und Männer*, Mechthild M. Jansen (ed.)

11 Brückner, Margit: *In Frauenfragen sind Männerfragen sind Geschlechterfragen? 40 Jahre Neue Frauenbewegung, Conference in Bochum, 12 – 14 June 2008*.

12 See: Caixeta, Luzenir, *ibid*.

# 3

## Basic terms

In order to create a better understanding of the educational concepts presented here, we find it necessary to clarify the following basic terms on which our work is founded. These are elaborated in the following definitions of migrant woman, political antiracism, gender and class.

**Migrant woman:** In contrast to numerous definitions primarily based on stereotypical attributes of culture, ethnicity and class, we use the term migrant woman as “an oppositional site and strategic means of constructing a political identity—an identity that provides a basis for departure, action and political articulation.”<sup>13</sup>

Through our experience in working with migrant women, we have found that migrant women are not helpless victims who are excluded in everyday life, but instead, as Rubia Salgado states, they are actors who develop strategies against exclusion (and practices that legitimize exclusion) and create alternatives for inclusion while simultaneously transforming the preexisting state of things. “We see the construction of a migrant woman identity as a strategy situated within the fight for equal rights and for participation on European territory, for change and as a means of dismantling structures of exclusion.”<sup>14</sup>

As subjects who take political action, migrant women demand self-determination and equal rights for participation. One way of doing this is to form alliances

with members of the social majority while remaining aware of the asymmetry of power. A key point in this political strategy is to refrain from shying away from conflicts. In realizing this, conditions for egalitarian cooperation will be met. Here, we come back to Paulo Freire, as we speak of “dialogue, as essential communication [which] must underlie any cooperation.”<sup>15</sup>

**Political Antiracism:** As Paulo Freire states, “the concrete situation of oppression must be transformed.”<sup>16</sup> For this reason, we conceive our educational projects as political and antiracist projects and refer to the concept of political antiracism, which “in the last few years has been employed by those working on issues of migration and asylum as a way of setting it apart from moral antiracism.”<sup>17</sup> The term is specifically used as a way of opposing the trend toward practices and ideologies that create structural inequalities, as a way of claiming equal rights for all and equality for migrants on all levels. It provides a counterpoint to moral racism that is founded on individualizing and psychologizing ways of explaining or justifying a more or less conscious willingness to be racist, leaving the existing social structures intact. In contrast, political antiracism seeks to enable the participation of migrants on all levels of everyday life.<sup>18</sup>

When we speak of antiracist work in the classroom, we are referring to discussing racism in class. This means taking a look at the manifold dimensions, facets, mechanisms and functions of racism; practices and forms of exclusion (racism in everyday life, institutional forms of racism, negative and “positive” forms of racism etc.); exchanging experiences (practical and observed); and discussing the underlying legal structures and pointing out the structural and historical circumstances. What comes up in these discussions forms the basis for developing individual and collective strategies to combat the forms of racism identified. One of the most important cornerstones of - and requirements for - antiracist work in the classroom is dealing with the teachers’ internalized racism as well. The difficulty of not being racist lies in the “social space,” as Bourdieu calls it, which is the context in which we find ourselves. This social space is regimented by social categories that reflect the power relations at play within the spaces. We all have internalized these social categories, which we use as points of reference when designating the place that migrants or other excluded groups belong within society. Our work is not done by simply calling ourselves or our actions “antiracist.” The danger of simply claiming not to be a racist is that it simply projects racism “outwards” and onto others without eradicating the racist structures and instruments of power, and thereby reproducing them. We endorse the position that it is necessary to “understand one’s own racism, which is a necessity because we all have a position within this society that is related to racist structures. It is therefore indispensable that we continue to constantly uncover and work on changing one’s own racism and that this is done parallel to our other

13 Sadjed, Ariane; Stöger, Marion, Prakash-Özer in collaboration with Rubia Salgado (eds.) at maíz: Handbuch zum Curriculum für antirassistische Bildungsberatung. Linz, April 2007, p. 12.

14 Salgado, Rubia 2005, p. 9.

15 Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myry Bergman Ramos. New York/London: Continuum 1984, p. 168.

16 Freire 1984, 37.

17 Bratić, Ljubomir und Görg, Andreas: *Das Projekt des politischen Antirassismus*. In: *Malmö 1*, 2003.

18 *ibid.*; see also: Bratić, Ljubomir (ed.): *Landschaften der Tat. Vermessung, Transformationen und Ambivalenzen des Antirassismus in Europa*. Linz/Vienna 2002.

Protagonism



political work.”<sup>19</sup> This also means making a point of discussing power structures and hegemonic relations to come to realize and question privileges and positions (including one’s own).

An indispensable and constructive component within this context is the self-evaluation process, as it enables a process-oriented, purposeful and systematic self-professionalization (increase of one’s own training and raising one’s own qualifications) of all participants, particularly of those teaching within these contexts.

**Gender:** Following many feminist theorists, we understand gender not as something we have or are, but as something we “do.” Psychologist Gitta Mühlen Achs states, “this means that through body language, through the development of our specific interests, etc. we are always performing and producing our gender membership, thereby ensuring we are unmistakably identified in a gender-appropriate manner in our surroundings.”<sup>20</sup> We agree with Claudia Schneider that it is the responsibility of the individual teachers and educational institutions “to examine in detail [each pedagogical act and process] and to what extent they serve to stabilize the existing gender relations or encourage critical ways of addressing them, and therefore, also changing them.”<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, we advocate and support critical ways of addressing heteronormative stereotypes. Following queer theory, we also seek to make a contribution to the analysis and deconstruction of forms of power and norms of gender(ed) roles in society. Queer theory presumes that gender and sexual identity are not “natural givens,” but that they are constructed through social and cultural processes. Using the methods and knowledge from deconstruction, poststructuralism, discourse analysis and gender studies, queer theory seeks to analyze and deconstruct sexual identities, forms of power and norms.

For example, within the educational process we aim to examine the materials in class looking at how they ascribe to norms. We also learn to identify and critically assess the binary ascriptions—which are apparent on so many levels—as well as the ways in which we use them. Within this context, we would also like to refer to the central role of language as an instrument used to construct reality, but at the same time also as opening possibilities for initiating processes to change these realities.

**Class:** When we talk about discussing social structures and ascriptions within our curriculum, we are also talking about the issue of class. This refers to reflecting on the hierarchical relations and social structures through which we are constantly navigating in our everyday lives. “Part of this is asking oneself to what extent she or he follows the norms without questioning them, which also creates a certain complicity. Uncritical followers simply oscillate between objectivism and subjectivism, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, instituting and

institutionalization, critique and self-critique and between privileges and distribution.”<sup>22</sup>

When we talk about class, we are referring to discussions regarding different forms of access to resources (economy, education, labor, knowledge). We are also talking about the restricted social mobility of certain groups produced by these differences. These discussions are also inevitably related to the pursuit of maintaining hierarchies and upholding the power of privileged groups.

In his writings on the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire further calls upon the teachers to ask themselves for whom, and in whose interest, they are working. Paulo Freire asks the teachers to decide in favor of the interests of excluded learners, for social and political change, for the liberation of the oppressed. Teachers who consider their praxis to be objective or neutral, according to Freire, ultimately support the dominant discriminating and exploitative conditions and structures.<sup>23</sup>

“The systematic inclusion and critical reflection of social situations and conditions of racism and feminism are absolutely necessary to be able to understand and attack forms of power and dominance.”<sup>24</sup> In accordance with all the other educational measures at maiz, this curriculum is “characterized by a distinct socio-political, critical, feminist—and not Eurocentric—epistemological position. It calls for all participants (students and teachers) to critically reflect their own value judgments of knowledge that is legitimized by hegemonic structures. It is about the development, experimentation and constant evaluation of methodological approaches and instruments that enable a critical appropriation of existing hegemonic knowledge. And, at the same time, it is about strengthening and acknowledging the marginalized knowledge of the participants.”<sup>25</sup> Following Paulo Freire, we understand the programs we offer to be political educational programs in which the participants and teachers look at themselves in relation to the world, acknowledging the differences, rendering hierarchies and power relations transparent in order to become capable of questioning and dismantling them.

19 BUM – Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen. “Unser kleines Jenseits ~ Das Wir und der Antirassismus, ein Beitrag zur antirassistischen Arbeitspraxis.” In: *Grundrisse 06/6*. <http://www.grundrisse.net/grundrisse06/6bum.htm>

20 Mühlen Achs, Gitta in: Claudia Schneider, vom heimlichen Lehrplan zu gender-fairen Unterrichtsmaterialien: Über Eisberge, Haltungen, pädagogische Standards und good practice. Hg.: Koordinationsstelle für Geschlechterstudien, Frauenforschung und Frauenförderung der Karl-Franzens Universität Graz, 2006. S. 1

21 Faulstich-Wieland, Horstkemper 1996, 583 in: Schneider, p. 2.

22 Araujo, Tania, 2007.

23 Freire, Paulo, 1984.

24 Araujo, Tania, *ibid.*

25 Salgado, Rubia. *Realitätsverändernde Bildungsprozesse. Politische Bildungsarbeit im autonomen Migrantinnen-Zentrum maiz. Frauensolidarität Nr. 103, 1/2008, pp. 12-13.*

# 4

## Methodological Foundation and its Components

The reaction to political, social and economic change within our lived-in European world is contingent upon the effects of concepts and realizations within the field of education and vocational qualification.

At the moment, there is a strong trend toward marketing oneself, one's personal work performance and efficiency. It is increasingly becoming the individual's responsibility to create one's own economic independence. This tendency points toward a focus on ensuring a certain quality of life and developing strategies of coping with social demands in order to come to terms with the globalization of the economy. This is also why the catch phrase "life-long learning" has by now seeped into all areas of education. In addition, there is a trend throughout Europe in which the educational goals and contents are aimed at providing the economic market with qualified personnel (human resources) and consequently, at restructuring schools and educational institutions for children and youth. It is most visible when looking at people who seek to enter, or are already part of, this "acquisition" process. The continual growth of the labor market, particularly in the service sector, has shown that—especially in areas where care and assistance services are provided—there is an extremely high demand for skilled personnel with multiple qualifications. At the same time, (probably due to the demographic developments of the increase in the growth of the "gray area" sector) job descriptions, career profiles and staff appointment schemes of institutions in the care industry that create the lists and determine which professional qualifications are necessary, are also constantly changing.

People hoping to find a job in this area must now have working knowledge of the structures and frameworks within the trade, in addition to their general

professional qualifications. It stands to reason that migrants, in comparison with those socialized "on site" and who grew up within these contexts, are faced with disproportionate challenges. Taking these factors into consideration—in terms of the qualification process, the trainees and their empowerment—calls for an honest and critical examination and approach to the pedagogical concepts used.

### *Critique of "intercultural pedagogy"*

Over the past few decades the necessity has arisen to examine and create pedagogical approaches that are able to deal with migrants within the educational process. Some of the many relevant factors are the traditional social structures and their definition, particularly in terms of: equal opportunity, difference in and levels of recognition/acknowledgement for various cultural ways of living, concepts of equality, institutional discrimination, assimilationism, tolerance, solidarity and many others. Paul Mecherli provides a fundamental approach to these issues in his "Pedagogy for Migration" (Migrationspädagogik). A particularly salient point in his argument is the critique of "intercultural pedagogy," because in the everyday practice in our courses (literacy, German as a foreign language, vocational pre-qualification training etc.) we have repeatedly reached the limits of "intercultural" pedagogical concepts. It has become commonplace that migrants are visibly present in so many areas of social life, including educational programs and in public schools. Because the "foreignness" of people with a migration background is always a topic of intercultural learning - even if their "sense of being foreign" has long since disappeared - this pedagogic concept can become a source of constant strain for those with a migration background. The relentless focus on "difference" makes it difficult to develop a socially productive form of self-identity.

Although the current trend in pedagogic concepts is to underscore the advantages of intercultural competence and intercultural learning, we must remain aware of the fact that this always refers to the notions of "difference" and "otherness," which are particularly problematic if "intercultural" only refers to migration-specific aspects of the learning experience. The only way to incorporate the term "intercultural" in a useful manner is if it is generalized and integrated into every pedagogic situation- not just when addressing migrant learners - and used as a way of examining the conditions for the creation of constructions (such as nationality, ethnicity, class, age, religion, educational background, gender etc.) that create these very differences. In a nutshell: watch out for "culturalizations!"<sup>26</sup>

The "pedagogic act" can only be expanded if we are able to perceive and reflect on the complex settings and social conditions (including one's own position) in a more nuanced manner. Considering the complexity and the ability to differentiate enable us to move past the extremely reduced approaches to "intercultural competence." (For example, understanding that belonging to a culture is the same as belonging to a nation or ethnicity, and by establishing the other instead of talking about the elements that make up the site of action.)

Even the titles of the PreQual program's modules are geared toward reflecting a

26 Mecherli, Paul: Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik, Meinheim und Basel 2004.



nuanced approach to “interculturality” in education. Not only the language used in PreQual, but also the concrete actions and work done in the classroom reflect this approach. A pivotal point is that the teachers reflect their own position within the context, the position of the institution represented, the tasks and goals, the location of the class, the social and labor market policy frameworks and how these affect all persons involved ... etc.

### *Dialogue, Understanding and Power*

We would like to introduce two of the most essential components of this project: understanding and power. The moment that two persons (in the classroom there are more) encounter one another and enter into the process of communication they are immediately influenced by different (power) positions and conditions with the goal of understanding one another. As soon as the goal of understanding has been reached, the necessity of the exchange and discussion is lost and a position becomes fixed. The classroom setting is a situation of inequality and asymmetrical distributions of power. Here, the stage in which the participants (those engaging in communication) find themselves is (pre)defined and controlled in a one-sided manner. For this reason, there is an exceptionally high risk that the dominant form of understanding takes on the form of appropriation and assimilation. If the process of encountering is then occluded by appropriative and assimilatory ways of “understanding,” it will result in a lack of necessity for continuing the discussion and dialogical exchange.

Contrary to the argument that this is a waste of time, we see the pedagogy based on dialogue as the only sustainable form. “Being dialogical means being committed to bringing about a constant change of reality.”<sup>27</sup> This also means dealing with the existing directive positions through dialogue and becoming more aware of them. “We should respect the plurality of voices, the variety of discourses and, of course, also the different ‘languages’ (linguagens). We must be tactful, but a neutral stance is impossible.”<sup>28</sup> Freire also notes that every human action is purposeful and therefore has a direction. “School teachers who say ‘I respect students and I am not directive since they are individuals deserving respect, they should determine their own direction’ end up helping the power structure.”<sup>29</sup>

This is also the case regarding the subject’s desire for recognition. If we act as if the possibilities were infinite, we would also risk becoming one with the hegemonic power structures and racist positions that would ultimately only reestablish the legitimacy of certain individuals’ power over others.<sup>30</sup> There is no dialogue without asymmetry. Not even between teachers and students. If we were to claim there was, we would not be reflecting on the power relations, but reproducing them.<sup>31</sup> A directive practice does not exclude respect and freedom.

27 Freire, Paulo: *Unterdrückung und Befreiung*. Schreiner, Mette, Oesselmann, Kinkelbur, Waxmann (eds.) Münster 2007, p. 52.

28 Freire, Paulo / Macedo, Donaldo. *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* London: Routledge 1987, p. ix.

29 *ibid.*

30 Note: a total exclusion of directive elements is not realistic. It is however necessary to become aware of the emerging and controlling stances and to address these as well as the hegemonic relations in which we act.

31 See: Mecheril, Paul: *Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik*, Meinhem / Basel 2004.

According to Freire, characteristics essential to the teachers’ democratic authority are: security, professional competence and generosity.

When we speak of recognition, education and migration we must also maintain that it is indeed possible to recognize and support the qualifications and experiences of migrant women within political education work, thereby specifically and decisively combating the systematic disqualification of migrant women on the European labor market.

### *Paulo Freire and Pedagogy for Liberation*

In this brochure we have repeatedly referred to and quoted Paulo Freire, whose writings and practice on the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (first published in 1970), Education, the Practice of Freedom (first published in 1967), Pedagogy of Solidarity (1974), Pedagogy of Autonomy (first published 1996) have created a new approach to fundamental issues of pedagogy and educational policy, and thereby also taken seriously the centuries-old demand for the starting point in pedagogy to be: “from the child herself/himself, from the learners themselves!”

Freire sought to incorporate the students’ life realities and experiences into the learning experience. One of the demands he implemented was a literacy program in which the teachers were to spend time with and live alongside the people in the villages where they would later hold their classes. In this way, they were able to come into contact with the lived culture of the area, including the myths, common knowledge and the social mechanisms. They experienced basically everything that happened on a day-to-day basis in the village; everything that had a decisive influence on the everyday life of those living there. According to Paulo Freire’s dialogical principle, only after experiencing the everyday life of the learners is the teacher able to construct the actual learning situation.

This example reflects a different intercultural perspective within pedagogy—the various levels and influences of the environment in which the educational process takes place—enabling the students to be recognized as active subjects, while also constantly reflecting on one’s own actions.

This is an essential approach for educational programs that are designed for people who decide to take part in (further) education programs as adults. The educational institutions must “respect the different cultural constructions and achievements of those who wish to take part in further education programs and be open to the previous knowledge of those interested in the program.”<sup>32</sup>

The dialogue is a place where problems are formulated and enables the course participants to notice and articulate their previous knowledge and experience in relation to the topics in class. The following individual and/or collective steps for learning are designed according to this dialogical principle. The curriculum is not an end in itself, but is directed by the demands and goals of each participant in the course. On the one hand, the curriculum aims to fulfill the prerequisite for entering further formal qualification programs, and on the other hand, to have an immediate and positive effect on one’s everyday life through what was learned in class. The focus here is on three levels: the individual, the collective and the social

32 *Ibid.* p. 10, *Zum Geleit: Paulo Freire lesen*, von Heinz-Peter Gerhardt.

means of transforming reality.

“In following the approaches in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, we understand dialogue as an encounter among subjects who turn toward the world through reflection and practice in order to change it. The awareness and reflection on the social position of the participants and addressing the power asymmetry between hegemonic and excluded groups are not only the precondition, but also the outcome of a dialogical and antiracist educational process.”<sup>33</sup>

In terms of the prequalification program PreQual this means that, in addition to the professional qualification in the field of health and care, there must also be a willingness to deal with and become involved in dialogical class processes. It goes without saying that one’s personal experience with migration, exclusion or other forms of marginalization and with the development of strategies to deal with these issues provide a significant enrichment to a person’s teaching skills.

In our experience, a noticeably positive synergy effect has taken place between the methods realized and the self-evaluation concept when implementing the PreQual program. Essential requirements here are that the teachers involved are part of a team (for example, they all teach regularly within a particular measure) and that they meet in a common space for planning and preparation, exchange, reflection and collegial consultation. This also means ensuring that the individual content of the units and modules (and overlapping themes) correspond to one another, and the exchanging of course information and their specific character throughout the implementation. However, the most essential component is the drafting and implementation of the self-evaluation process on the staff (teachers’) level. In addition to providing a structured evaluation of the class itself, the working room provides the possibility for the teachers to reflect their own in-class work and to develop and expand (new) strategies and ideas.

### ***Boal and the Theatricalization of the Learning Process and Transforming Reality***<sup>34</sup>

In the 1970s, Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal worked to develop critical forms of education and action through employing pedagogy and theater with the oppressed people of the world in order to overcome social systems of oppression. The methods Boal developed have received great resonance and are still widely used today. The theoretical level of the educational process focuses on the cognitive faculty that was also conceived as entailing a reflexive faculty, making it possible to focus on the individual person as well. With the aim of understanding oneself and the world, education becomes a process of critical self-empowerment.

Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed, Theater of Liberation or Theater of Encounter - particularly Forum Theater - can be described as emancipatory

33 Salgado, Rubia: “Realitätsverändernde Bildungsprozesse. Politische Bildungsarbeit im autonomen Migrantinnen-Zentrum maiz.” *Frauensolidarität* Nr. 103, 1/2008, p. 12.

34 Boal, Augusto: *Theater der Unterdrückten. Übungen und Spiele für Schauspieler und Nicht-Schauspieler*: (ed. and trans.) Martina Spinu and Henry Thorau. Frankfurt/Main, 1989.

learning and research processes that fuse biographic self-reflection with sociological experimentation in order to transform reality.

Using the Forum Theater method enables the players to gain knowledge through scenes that make it possible for the viewer to pick up on subtle, nonverbal, indirect forms of exerting power and then to take action and re-define the situation by acting within the piece. This theatricalization of the learning process encourages the participants to try out new ways of acting and to change the situation in a playful manner. Developing one’s fantasy and creativity strengthens confidence and gives the protagonist the courage to act differently in real situations.

Through theatrical action social contexts marginalized and hegemonic codes (conventions, norms, etc.) are portrayed, thereby becoming tangible and can therefore also be used for making observations.

Working with the methods of Augusto Boal requires an extremely great amount of specialized, technical and didactic skills. Ideally, teachers employing this method would also have a background that includes experience with migration. Examples of other methods Boal developed are Newspaper Theater and Invisible Theater.

### ***What can Paulo Freire contribute to educating women and young migrants in the EU today?***<sup>35</sup>

Paulo Freire called the most dramatic field of education that of youth, adults, women and men living under poor social conditions and oppression, prisoners, migrants, male and female sex workers, domestic servants, indigenas [indigenous people], “slaves in quilombolas”<sup>36</sup> and people with serious physical or mental dis/abilities. Working in education with these social groups means developing a pedagogy of dreams and desires together with them. That is what Merleau-Ponty called the “hidden desire,” the necessary dream, which is often forbidden to be dreamt.

It is a challenging utopia to generate autonomy and independence from paternalism, authoritarianism and oppression, to bring about the freedom to choose one’s way of living, which is never the same for every participant in a large social network. It is a purely individualistic dream.

Each person who liberates herself or himself relentlessly pursues not only their own personal liberation but also contributes to the liberation of all people along side them, and all those in their web of relations. Dreams are this subversive form and transgress captivity through transcendence; they overcome authoritarian methods in the school system, in the dominating culture and in the lack of infrastructure, such as the lack of concrete choices.

35 This section is an abridged version of a lecture given by Dr. Luiz Augusto Passos at the meeting of the international partners in Linz on 18 May 2009, the manuscript was abbreviated in collaboration with Dr. Tania Araujo.

36 A quilombo in Brazil is a settlement of black people who fled from slavery.

Adults - women and men - depend on their teacher throughout the process to not deconstruct their dreams and the web of meanings expressed in gestures and corporeality that also give direction to human life. To shelter with affection, to recognize the truth in human beings, to encourage success, to understand differences, and to encourage life: that is every teacher's job. To be human with human beings so that the dimension of humanity becomes the grand horizon in the educational processes.

To realize sensitivity, communion/community and respect as the basic material of every educational process. Transforming education into a school of tenderness in which the teacher and the person learning can establish an ongoing education in a condition of equality, a basis—pedagogy—that pays attention to the signs of hope which emerge from the responsibility toward humanity.

It is always appropriate to draw the government's attention to the necessity of certain destructive and conscious processes in addition to social prescriptions to counter socio-cultural differences that must be accepted as natural processes of stigmatization, oppression and inequality.

There is no education without a dialogical relationship and reciprocity and, therefore, it is essential that a critical reflection of the asymmetries among all persons involved takes place. Adult education is a form of education located within social movements. It is a project of rebellion and of being different/otherness. In this case, education is a project of will and freedom, a project against determination.

## 5

# Educational Measure PreQual—A Process-oriented Concept

PreQual was developed, tested and evaluated within the framework of the educational programs at maiz. For this reason, the concept is based on the pedagogic practices of maiz. These are antiracist, feminist and seek to contribute to emancipation, to transforming reality and to dismantling structural discrimination. With a critical distance to intercultural pedagogy, maiz is particularly opposed to its focus on culture and identity and its utilization of “culture” to veil structural forms of discrimination.

The following ideas are the cornerstones that make up the educational principles at maiz. These principles were developed together the PreQual program teachers, discussed with all PreQual participants and finally agreed upon as the guiding principles for implementing the course measures.

*Self-  
organization*

## *Educational Principles of the Curriculum*

- The programs we offer are based on recognition, appreciation and expanding the participants' knowledge and skills.
- The learning process is a content-oriented debate on course-relevant issues.
- The principle of dialogue and “the pedagogy of the oppressed” form the basis of our work. We understand dialogue as an encounter between subjects who apply their practices and reflections within the world they live in order to transform it.
- Awareness and reflection of the social positions of all involved and dealing with the power relations between hegemonic and marginalized groups are both constitutive and a result of the dialogical and antiracist educational process.
- At maiz, empowerment is understood as a political strategy aimed at structural transformation. We view facilitating the discussion on the causes of problems to be a significant part of the empowerment process.
- Our didactic concepts utilize a transcultural perspective in addressing certain issues in class. Our educational work takes a look at principles of order and their relevance to the cultural views of the course participants and migration without reproducing or fixating them. Instead, we seek to reflect and question other associated aspects, such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, class/social status, ownership, etc.
- Unemployment is not conceptualized as something that can be blamed on individuals, but instead as a consequence of socio-economic and political developments.
- Educational measures initiated by labor market policies should initiate awareness processes that enable course participants to explore and realize practices and perspectives for acting as subjects within society. This makes it possible to create a space, together with the teachers, where strategies can be developed to transform one's own situation as well as the overall situation of the labor market.

## *Objectives*

The main objectives of the prequalification measure are:

- Orientation according to the health, care and assistance sector of each country. This includes taking a close look at career profiles, qualifications, training and education programs, institutions and structures. In contrast to those in the social majority, migrant women have hardly any information or experiences to fall back on when it comes to getting a better idea of the system or of the career profiles in the health and care sector.

- Conveying the necessary professional and social skills with special attention to social structures and relationships. This includes examining the ways in which terms are used in different parts of the world, such as work, care, migration, class, gender etc.
- Enhance learning skills
- Build personal confidence
- Conveying skills that entail elements of autonomy and emancipation, lifelong and holistic learning
- Expand linguistic confidence—building skills in speech, listening comprehension, reading and writing and considering their interrelations as an integral part of the learning process
- Introduction to specialist language use and terminology in the health, care and assistance sector
- Care sector-specific communication exercises
- Continual reflection of the career profiles and work situation in this sector
- Support and assistance in applying for and securing a place in training and education programs
- Creation of application folders and job application training
- Empowerment and increasing personal skills
- Insight into the practical work and the tasks involved in different professions in the care sector
- Discussing experiences and developing strategies for dealing with discrimination
- Basic introduction to electronic data processing
- Getting to know different strategies for strengthening the personal learning process

## *Target group*

The PreQual course is aimed at first and second-generation migrant women who wish to pursue a job in the social, health and care sectors.

The concrete implementation of the measure includes support and counseling for those interested in the course and for course participants. Our target group is expanded to include women currently working in the sector or those currently in training courses for the sector. The measure also incorporates specialists and experts from the health and care sector who are involved in the short-term internships, field trips, lectures or other forms of support or contact to the PreQual team.



## Framework Curriculum

The curriculum is divided into five thematic modules that entail individual points for each course unit. The curriculum below represents the framework for the teaching plan conceptualized for international implementation. The open character of the framework provides flexibility for the national implementations while still maintaining the principles of our work. The practical implementation of the curriculum is designed in a way that makes it possible to constantly rework and adapt the content of the modules. This is particularly relevant because the outcome of the self-evaluation, an integral part of the course's implementation, greatly defines the curriculum. All the modules of the entire curriculum are interrelated and reference one another.<sup>37</sup>

### 1. Introduction to health care and social services with a special focus on social structures and categories relevant to issues of labor, care, migration, class, gender, etc. in different regions of the world. (120 units)

- 1.1 Career profiles in international comparison
- 1.2 Law
- 1.3 Communication and conflict management
- 1.4 Applying for a job and education programs
- 1.5 First aid course

### 2. Personal orientation for health care occupations that incorporate transcultural, political, economic and gender-related aspects (130 units)

- 2.1 Personal position for working in health care and social services
- 2.2 Ethics
- 2.3 Law

### 3. Improving language and communication skills and modes of study for professions in health, care and assistance (200 units)

- 3.1 Expanding and deepening German language skills: new vocation-specific vocabulary, grammar exercises, spelling, phonetics, syntax etc); reading comprehension, conveying content verbally and in writing
- 3.2 Vocation-specific communication training
- 3.3 Introduction to study methods
- 3.4 Rhetoric and presentation techniques

<sup>37</sup> The course content is defined in greater detail in the curriculum and handbook. See: *PreQual: Handbuch – Rahmencurriculum und Unterrichtsleitfaden. Interkulturelle Qualifizierung zum Einsteig in Gesundheits- und Pflegeberufe für Migrantinnen* or contact the partner organizations for their material.

### 4. Information and Communication Technology (50 units)

- 4.1 Socio-political aspects of ICT
- 4.2 Exploration of how a computer is built and how it works
- 4.3 Basic skills in office programs
- 4.4 Internet: functions, uses and data security

### 5. Short-term internships, Excursions and Supervision (150 units)

- 5.1 Excursions
- 5.2 Short-term internship
- 5.3 Supervision and reflection

#### In all modules:

- Phases of self-study (20% of the unit)
- Evaluation (5-10% of the unit)

### Educational methods

“The learning process does not consist of purely conveying knowledge and information or of a training situation.”<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, it takes place within a content-based discussion on the topics of each unit. The main approaches in the course's methodology are: participation, communication and interculturality. The teachers all work according to the dialogical principle, Paulo Freire's “Pedagogy for Liberation” and Augusto Boal's “Theater of Liberation - Forum Theater.”<sup>39</sup> For, “dialogue results from the encounter in which persons are co-Subjects [...], as part of the world's transformation.”<sup>39</sup> Rubia Salgado states that working in education is a process that entails “a tension between two dimensions: on the one hand the course participants shape the education process through bringing in their social positions, specific knowledge, stories, experiences, cultures, etc., and on the other hand, they are also asked to appropriate the codes, skills and culture of the dominant society.” Salgado further states “a critical educational process is not about stating a preference for either one of these dimensions, but for the tension between the two.”<sup>40</sup> The teachers take on the task of creating a process enabling the participants to recognize the different tensions, to understand where they come from, and to find and invent ways of dealing with them.

<sup>38</sup> Salgado, Rubia, 2005, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> See: Freire, Paulo, 1973, p. 72, In Salgado

<sup>40</sup> Salgado, Rubia, *ibid.*



## Self-evaluation

The educational measure is accompanied by a self-evaluation. It represents an essential element for creating transparency and purpose for the educational work geared toward meeting the needs of everyone involved. Educational goals are defined and substantiated in the operative measures. With the help of the indicators and instruments for collecting information, the extent to which the set objectives were realized is systematically assessed. The evaluation outcome forms the basis for reflecting on eventual changes in the objectives or in the measures themselves. This constant reflection ensures that the measure's objectives match the needs and necessities of the target group and the antiracist principles of our education work. In this way, the education process in which the target group is actively involved is constantly optimized.

Process-oriented and discursive analyses of data systematically collected by the PreQual team enable an ongoing professionalization of all involved in the educational process. This is one of the key elements of self-evaluation. This was developed as a response to the necessity for an evaluation tool that not only was right for the target group, but also for the context. We set out to develop a user-oriented model (providing practice-related results) that was also process-oriented and participatory. The participatory element is crucial in breaking down the hierarchical relation between researcher and “research objects.” It enables the migrant participants to also be understood as quality management experts. This has allowed us to address and meet the following demands:

1. We understand self-evaluation as an integral part of the educational process and therefore design it as such. The process itself is a political culture.
2. Self-evaluation complies with the antiracist and feminist educational principles and is an essential element in ensuring these principles remain prominent in the measure.
3. Evaluation must also be an act of empowerment (in the sense of emancipation) for both the participants and the teaching staff. The ties between empowerment and realization on merely a personal level must be broken, and instead a focus should be placed on the social components. Evaluation contributes to increasing autonomy and participation within educational contexts geared toward migration.
4. It must enable systematic self-reflection for the teachers and contain an element of self-steering and self-professionalization. It must contribute to a debate on ethics, in particular on knowledge legitimized through hegemony.
5. It must be systematic and process-oriented. The indicators must constantly be tested and the outcome constantly integrated and documented in the following measures.
6. The evaluation must take place in close cooperation with the participants. The participants are NOT research objects.

7. Both external and on-staff experts (including the participants) can become involved (where necessary). The project team decides who to involve in the process, and when.
8. Observations by external experts are prohibited, on principle.
9. The team develops the instruments based on the goals and the criteria to be examined and, when all participants agree, they are implemented in the program.
10. Dealing with data in a respectful manner and communicating the outcome to the participants are a general requirement.
11. The principles for dealing with this data are: commitment, trust and anonymity

Steps to planning the self-evaluation:

- Involvement of all participants in the planning and conceptualization of the measure from the very beginning, particularly concerning responsibilities, resources, schedule and location
- Introduction for the teaching staff and agreement on the fundamental principles of the self-evaluation work
- Within the team:
  - Specification of the education objectives and decision on which of the goals should be the focus of the evaluation
  - Determination of the criteria most instrumental for reaching the objectives
  - Determination of the measurable indicators and development/selection of the data collection instruments
- Within the course:
  - Information for course participations about the self-evaluation, its objectives, implementation and principles
  - Deciding together on the self-evaluation instruments to be used in the course—if necessary, modification according to the wishes and suggestions of the participants
  - Scheduling the time in for the self-evaluation within the class plan
  - Regular implementation and documentation of the outcome
  - Communicating the results and making the necessary adjustments according to the information from the self-evaluation

- Within the team:
  - Regular meetings in which the instruments are examined and, when necessary, modification/adaptation; analysis of the outcome on schedule; discussion of the outcome; decisions on the consequences and on integrating the findings into the program;
  - Documentation of the outcome

### *Interlinking course content and curriculum*

The order in which the content is presented in the modules corresponds with the basic structure. First there is an introduction to the theory and practice of care work, which includes a first aid course. This is followed by modules focusing on language and communication skills, which provide the participants with the basic knowledge necessary for taking part in a short-term internship. In addition, the teachers generally elaborate on the interrelations between the topics and pay close attention to the order in which they are taught, in order to maintain the clarity of these connections.

### *Course formats*

Group learning has proven to be a successful method in many of the countries where PreQual has taken place, including Austria where maiz has already conducted four PreQual courses.

In Austria, the course structure for the group learning process consists of regular weekly classes held in the mornings, for four to six hours each day.

The group learning method has a number of advantages, particularly for the target group. It provides an enriching experience for the individual participants and for the overall group. Some of the more specific positive effects include: strengthening the participants' confidence through exchange with colleagues, sharing and reflecting experiences and incidents, and developing strategies to deal with them.

### *Course location*

An essential part of realizing the pedagogic concept is essential to carefully consider the course location. We are well aware of the fact that power relations and dependencies are particularly easily reproduced or even amplified in measures for the labor market and that the course location greatly influences the learning situation. Because of their ideological orientation, it is essential that self-organizations step in and represent the interests of those learning and create a learning atmosphere situated outside the ever-present hegemonic structures that the participants are confronted with on a daily basis. Through providing the participants with an experiential space that is not bound to everyday structures and principles of order, they are able to reflect on what they have learned and experienced and put them into new perspectives.

Simultaneously, the course can provide insight into structures and the workflow in the social, health and care sector only if the participants are able to establish direct contact to these institutions. This is done, on the one hand, via the short-term internship and, on the other hand, through the involvement of various project partners in creating the modules. For example, the first aid class is held on site in the care sector, enabling the women to enter and become familiar with different institutions.

### *Lecturers*

Working on a number of different themes that take into consideration the above mentioned educational principles, taking into consideration the participants' broad fields of knowledge and experience and systematically applying partnership-based teaching and evaluation methods also mean that the trainers' qualification profile is must also cover several disciplines. Their diverse skills and qualifications must include: certification and experience with training and education programs in the sector; the skills and desire to apply participatory teaching methods; and the desire to address issues of everyday life topics related to the migration experience. The best possible qualification is if the trainer has experienced migration first-hand. This ensures professional supervision of the participants and the course itself, a distinct measure of professionalism in dealing with personal biographies, teaching and work methods, course content, evaluation, communication and documentation.

### *Certification*

PreQual's orientation toward the qualified professional employment in the health and care sector has proved to be an invaluable direction in light of the recent global developments in the care sector. This is also compounded with the simultaneous growth in the disadvantages of migrant women on the local labor markets. Despite this, since PreQual began, we have been forced to formally submit to the limitations regarding the (inter) national recognition of this measure—the legal framework has made it impossible for the PreQual courses to be adopted into an officially recognized as a certified qualification course for the social, health and care sector in all the partner countries. Nonetheless, all of the organizations that have implemented the program until now have indeed ensured that, at least on a local level or informally, the PreQual certificate has been noticed and appreciated. In addition to representing the certificate-holder's experience in first aid and work experience in the sector (via the short-term internship), the certificate is also a testimony to the holder's personal commitment to entering this area of work. The certificate holders have received positive feedback during application processes for training or jobs in the field. Here, the international activities within the PreQual framework have an additional supportive effect, particularly in Linz, where maiz's experiences with this certification have been overwhelmingly positive. This can particularly be attributed to the (inter) national network and to the fact that the activities are set up on a long-term basis.

# 6

## International experiences and implementation recommendations

Since its inception, the PreQual educational measure has taken place in a total of seven European countries. Using the framework curriculum as the common basis, the concept was modified for the implementation in each national context by the national experts and with the support of maiz to. The following sections illustrate some ways of implementing the program and provide examples of specific experiences and outcomes.<sup>41</sup>

### ***6.1. Austria: The Achievements of maiz in Developing and Implementing the Program***

Including the first pilot phase of PreQual in 2006, maiz has realized a total of four PreQual courses (2007, 2007/2008, 2008/2009) in Linz, Upper Austria, and two upcoming measures are already in the works. Originally developed as part of an EU project<sup>42</sup> the first course was financed in part, and the following projects in full, by the health department of the province of Upper Austria.

Because maiz is self-organized, it has strong connections to a wide range of possible participants from the target group. This provides an added value for the course participants, because taking a course at maiz gives them easy access to a

<sup>41</sup> Detailed descriptions and progress reports on implementing the courses internationally are available in the electronic brochure "PreQual steps," the "Framework Curriculum Handbook and Guidelines."

<sup>42</sup> Leonardo da Vinci: Prequalification for Migrant Women in the Health Sector A/04/B/F/PP-158-130, maiz 2004.

wide range of low-threshold activities and services at maiz, including: legal, social and family counseling, participation in other educational programs and cultural projects at maiz, support and opportunities for networking and for exchanging experiences with experts with a migration background etc. In this way, maiz was able to amply meet the challenge of addressing and dealing with the complexity of issues concerning everyday life and work of migrant women.

The daily class schedule for all of the PreQual measures has been from Monday to Friday in the mornings. Translating this number of units a time frame means that the duration of the courses in Austria was between 4 ½ to 6 months. A total of 83 women proceeded to interview for the course and 63 women were accepted to take part in the course.

All participants who fulfilled the requirements for completion of the course (80% attendance, successful completion of the short-term internships including individual internship reports and first aid certification) were awarded a certificate with a detailed description of each of the modules to further underscore the skills they acquired in the program.

Each course was overseen by qualified, experienced trainers with expertise in nursing certification courses, training for working with the elderly, communication and job application training, computers and German as a foreign or second language. Many of the trainers have, in addition, also experienced life in migration first-hand. Further experts with and without a migration background joined the on-staff trainers for the units on specific issues, such as law, advocacy groups, the health care system in Austria etc.

### ***Competence center for health and migration***

while working on the project, all of the activities and contacts served to further expand the network and create a center of excellence in the field of care and migration. This has enabled us to reach migrants who work in (or seek to enter) this field of employment and provide them with a platform that functions as a support and exchange network. We also provide counseling for women interested in the career profiles, education opportunities and prerequisites for entering formal training programs in this area. Many of the women who expressed interest in working in this area were able to immediately enter a training program, while others opted to take the PreQual course.

### ***Recommendations and Feedback***

The PreQual framework curriculum clearly lays out the methodological and didactic direction of the course, provides guidelines for the participants, course location, sequence of the units and methods of evaluation while also keeping it open in terms of the concrete implementation. This flexibility enables the adaptation of the structure to consider the regional specificities and needs of the group participating. This concept therefore ensures that the actual local situation is addressed, the advantages of which has been confirmed on several accounts by the feedback of numerous participants. The first and foremost consideration in this regard is that the participants have the feeling that the course meets their personal needs. For this reason, only after the applications for participation are

submitted is the actual schedule for the course made, according to the hours that work best for those who will be taking the course.

The outcome of the courses and self-evaluation also confirm that the content, methods and the order in which the topics are addressed do indeed correspond with the participants' everyday realities, in addition to providing opportunities to learn about the concrete practices of the field. This target-oriented mode of course implementation is particularly visible in the example of short-term internships for which the participants are well prepared, as the themes and persons involved are mutually agreed upon in advance.

We also noticed that the course certification was indeed considered a prequalification and important documentation by decision-makers and those responsible for choosing applicants to take part in formal training programs.

In each of the PreQual courses, a sense of belonging or community is created that, together with the trainers, is one of its outstanding distinctive characters. This makes for a dynamic space that enables the trainers and project partners - particularly on a methodological level - to focus on the participants and the group rather than on reaching expectations or complying with prescribed norms. These are the moments in which the trainers are able to experience the revolutionary power of education, which give us a taste of the kinds of power and dynamics that educational processes are capable of.

## ***6.2. Greece / Antigone: Steps for implementing an international curriculum on a national level***

### ***Requirements and Recommendations in Greece***

In Greece, PreQual Steps course planning began by taking into account the following points:

- The need for qualified personnel in the health and care sector that is continually increasing, especially in the private sector
- The development and implementation of a curriculum in accordance with the participants' needs, while also considering the national requirements
- The training course to be based on a high level of competence and capacity in order for the participants to meet the needs of the labor market.

Antigone organized and carried out three national workshops in which the project's principles and goals were presented with a focus on the pedagogical approach and on the future perspectives of the project.

All relevant stakeholders participated in the workshops (migrant women, professors of nursing and of teachers at the public university and at private training schools, nurses at public hospitals, experts specialized in migration reality, etc) and there was a discussion on the suggested training course of PreQual and the possible adaptations in order to meet national needs.

During summer 2008, Antigone organized a lot of dissemination activities and conducted interviews with potential participants as well as trainers. After the elaboration of the curriculum upon and adapted to the participants' needs the course started at the end of October 2008.

It should be noted at this point that it was agreed that there should be a greater focus on the practical courses rather than on the theoretical ones, as it would be most probable for these women to find a job in the private sector while keeping in mind that, due to the Greek legal system, the possibility of finding a legal job in the public sector or studying in the Greek university is very unlikely.

The decision was also made to have quite a number of trainers to teach in the courses, as we from Antigone thought that it would be best for each one to teach the subject that he/she felt more confident about, was most specialized and more experienced in, and to have thus, the input of many talented teachers.

For the self-evaluation (SE) process we decided to carry it out with the Antigone staff. We from Antigone thought that it would be the best for the participants due to the fact that some trainers would appear only a few times and therefore the participants may not have felt comfortable enough to express themselves freely to them while, on the other hand, the Antigone staff had already started building a relationship of trust with the participants since their initial interviews

### ***Experiences and Feedback***

The training courses took place three times per week and from the beginning were attended by 16 migrant women from various countries in Europe, Africa and Asia, with roughly half of them could show up and participate on a regular basis. The trainers (Greeks, as well as migrants) gave a great deal of emphasis to one of the primary goals of the course; the participation aspect on behalf of the trainees - something that was being achieved by the application of various methods such as experiential learning, "role-plays" etc.

The course that was implemented combined both theoretical educational sessions, as well as practical workshops on issues such as: Medical Terminology, Care Skills, First Aid Course, Personal Orientation within the Health and Social Care Sector, Language and Communication Skills, Information and Communication Technology, field trips to various health and care institutions, internship and others.

A crucial point regarding course implementation was that there was a decision to combine theory and practice from the very beginning. We from Antigone believed that by putting into practice each weekend what the participants had been taught in theory during week days, it would make them more interested in the field and would also make the subjects more comprehensive.

Throughout the entire course, the big challenge was coordinating of all the trainers, especially those whose teaching subject had to do with medicine or nursing. The challenge related to the fear of one's teaching material "overlapping" someone else's. It should also be mentioned that, since the beginning of the course, the process of self-evaluation was applied as an integral part of the training.



The focus and the goals of the self evaluation were determined together with the participants and the persons who conducted the SE sessions and were in relation to the development of the course curriculum, the course implementation, its effectiveness regarding the future job seeking, as well as the empowerment of the participants.

The sessions were carried out in the form of round tables, mostly with verbal feedback and also, as the courses progressed and the participants started to feel more familiar with the whole process, some SE sessions were conducted with the use of questionnaires.

At the same time, all trainers were dedicated to the self-evaluation process as reflected in the extent to which the training provision and all methods applied during the courses led to high-quality outcome for the trainees. The process took into consideration the criteria of: appropriateness, comprehensiveness and usefulness to the participants.

The training courses were concluded in May with the participants' internships in a public hospital, a private medical clinic and an infants and young children day care centre.

It should be noted that the PreQual training course was carried out with no major problems surfacing and with all relevant stakeholders (participants, trainers, the Antigone working team) being really satisfied by its implementation.

### *6.3 The PreQual course in Spain/ IEPALA*

#### *Activities and experiences*

The PreQual project is being carried out in Spain by IEPALA (Institute of Political Studies for Latin America and Africa). Since 1954, IEPALA has operated as a non-profit organization in Spain, following the three main principles of:

- Critical analysis, study, and training with a focus on the historical and structural reality in Latin America, Africa and the Third World and the international factors determining their circumstances;
- International cooperation for development in the third world;
- The defense and promotion of population and human rights.

Besides professional training aimed specifically at migrants, we also wish to highlight the accompaniment and support we provide for numerous associations and platforms for immigrants whose sphere of action is the empowerment of immigrants in Spanish society.

After several national preparatory workshops a stable group of 15 students was finally formed who regularly attended the PreQual course in Madrid. The participants were all from various mostly Spanish-speaking countries such as Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, Paraguay, etc. All of the women were adults with little training and some experience in caring for the elderly.

The course took place in the afternoons from Monday to Friday over a period of four months. There were three groups of teachers involved, each in charge of the three sections into which the course was divided. All of the teachers (10 in total) were also involved in the evaluation process.

As a starting point we used a ready-made training curriculum, in which we incorporated a further focus on the personal development component and, for the practical element of the course, the contacts we had made with residences for the elderly. Each training module was subsequently linked to the related personal development module.

Unlike other training courses organized by IEPALA, the PreQual course featured a self-esteem and personal development module. And, following the participants' requests, a module on gender issues whose objective was the analysis of our role as women within social, work and family contexts, and an ICT module were added. Given the results, we believe that this component was essential to the course, as it encouraged the creation of a cohesive group of students who shared not only their interest in learning, but also their life experiences, much of which they had in common. The idea of dedicating part of the time to communicating their past migratory processes, their problems and current challenges in Spain, as well as their dreams for the future - whether in Spain or in their homeland - created a climate of trust and mutual support which was essential throughout the course. The women's confidence was further boosted by reusing knowledge they already had in relation to what was being studied. We all learned a great deal from one another and we also had a great time.

#### *The Process of Self-Evaluation*

The self-evaluation process began in the preparatory workshops even before the course had started. During the course periodic meetings were called involving the project coordinator and the coordinators responsible for the trainers on each of the modules in order to adapt the curriculum to meet the women's needs, as well as to decide upon crucial elements to include. The project coordinator also met with those responsible for the internships at residences for the elderly in order to establish criteria for both the work and subsequent evaluation process. Surveys were provided to the internship supervisors.

On completion of each module, a meeting was held with the teachers and students in order to evaluate the module - particularly the professors' work - to see whether the material taught matched what was set out in the program. The question focused especially on how the participants thought the course content might help them to find work. In these evaluation sessions, questionnaires were given to professors and students in order to gather information systematically.

Evaluation of the practical element, carried out as part of the training module in various ways, was essential. First-hand accounts were collected assessing how adequate the material had been with regard to the demands of the daily work carried out at a residence for the elderly.

Finally, a meeting of all the staff was held at the end of the course in order to analyze information gathered from the women, the teachers and the internship supervisors.



## *The certification and our networks*

The criteria in order to obtain certification required an attendance rate of 80% of each module. Other factors such as work carried out by the students and their involvement during class were also taken into account. Following the students' preference that the certificates should not only include the number of hours completed and the specific number of practical hours, we also accredited the women as caregiver of the elderly.

A contact was made by IEPALA with the public education and labor administration in order to ensure that the certificates were officially accepted. Unfortunately, these negotiations have been unsuccessful, due in part to the rigidity of the education system in Spain with regard to the recognition of titles granted by private entities.

Throughout the project development, IEPALA has been in close contact with their partners in Europe with whom they have exchanged information and offered and received both assistance and collaboration. In Spain, we worked mostly with immigrant associations who assisted us in the dissemination of information to the public and collaborated within the course. Several organizations paid visits during the course in order to explain their work and offer support and help to the students. We also had the support and cooperation of women's associations for distribution work within the course.

## *6.4 DemNet: Requirements and Recommendations in Hungary*

### *Presumptions and Preconditions*

The main challenge the original concept posed to DemNet Hungary was the difficulties in finding the right target group. It is a strong presumption of PreQual Steps that migrant women from outside the EU have a vital need to participate in a course, which, in itself, is not necessarily recognized by the accreditation authorities of the given state.

Due to the structure of migration, migrants' situation is very different in new EU Member States, and it is unique in Hungary compared to other New Member States. Most of the migrants who have legal status in Hungary are Hungarian-speaking ethnic Hungarians from neighboring countries who do have regular income and are therefore able to maintain their status. Non-Hungarian speaking migrants are present in a very low number and many migrants eventually move on to other, mainly Western, EU countries.

Many of the PreQual Steps Project presumptions would make this course perfectly suitable for Roma women in Hungary, whose social status in many regards is very comparable to migrant women's in old EU member states, despite the different historical background. Another presumption is that there are migrant women's organizations, or that migrant women are in general organized to some extent, and therefore, there is a "voice" which needs to be amplified and empowered. The evidence for this is not clear, and it is not implied here

that there are no migrant voices to be heard. However, the level of organization might need a much longer time and effort to surface than to the extent PreQual takes it for granted.

### *Preparatory Activities*

Several workshops were held in which experts in the field of migration as well as labor market specialists and health and care field experts discussed the feasibility and relevance of the proposed draft course concept. After some considerable delay in the planning phase due to the great number of obstacles resulting from external circumstances - such as the course not having gone through accreditation, without which the certificate is not recognized, making working in the public health and care sector out of consideration - DemNet began looking for a partner organization willing to implement the training itself.

The Refugee Reception Center at Bicske is the refugee camp responsible for carrying out integration programs and providing facilities able to assist persons with confirmed refugee status in their attempts to build a new life in Hungary. The Center could offer a training venue and assisted DemNet in finding women interested in an intercultural training with the goal of entering the labor market. This turned out to be successful and 8 women signed up for the intercultural training,<sup>43</sup> of whom regularly attend the course up to now. Eventually, four language teachers, one ICT trainer and one trainer from the skills development and self-orientation field were chosen and have participated in a series of workshops providing a training of trainers to accommodate the methodology and the principles in their own training tasks.

### *Experiences and Feedback*

By turning to refugee women expressly, several presumptions and principles of the PreQual Steps project gained extreme relevance and eventually became the empowering tool for these women in their search for personal integrity and intercultural understanding of their new context.

During the self-evaluation sessions carried out together with the trainers, the participants expressed their motivation and interest. They felt that the ICT training has been very useful, and that the language training is much more efficient by taking it out of a normal classroom setting and providing a chance to engage with their Hungarian context (field trips, food shopping, study sessions at different locations in Budapest away from the isolation of the camp itself, etc.).

DemNet decided to work with a smaller number of trainers since the language difficulties create an environment in which trust and knowing the trainer has a strong learning relevance. Currently, the training is still in progress, and the final evaluation will include external evaluators as well as the complete self-evaluation.

The group dynamic is amazing. The women became a strong self-supporting

<sup>43</sup> The course only finished at the same time this publication was scheduled to appear.

team and their level of Hungarian is rapidly improving. Meanwhile, they have important ties to the trainers and the support staff.

PreQual in Hungary became a training program evolving by small steps, though having an enormous empowering affect on women.

### **6.5 SOFIA: Requirements and Recommendations in the Czech Republic**

When the project was in the beginning we were already aware of importance of the success during the initiative phase in our country.

In spite of the short amount of time<sup>44</sup>, we decided to pay careful attention to preparing activities prior to the course. That entailed the creation of a communication platform capable of integrating co-workers, external persons and supporting partners whose interests in the issue will be sustained beyond the project, providing continuous feedback and maintain an interest in possible upcoming sequences to the project in the years to come.

The introductory workshops showed the importance of the project that goes beyond the mere time frame of the project. The participants who were really intrigued by the idea of PreQual steps looked at the project in terms of the situation in the Czech Republic and provided extremely useful feedback and comments.

The outcome confirmed, that migrant women should hence form the project's real centre of interest. Above all those migrant women sensitive to their environment and who take an active part in their lives in the face of "different" conditions were those who applied for enrolment. The dialog with panellists were beneficial, as it helped us to create a clear profile of the project target group that will most likely be maintained even for upcoming projects. At the very beginning, a clearly specific form of the program was established that essentially differs from integration projects – meaning, not only providing a simple service for migrant women seeking jobs, but instead a real opportunity to attain education and qualification in the project.

The target group was (and will continue to be) women willing to invest their time and energy in their own self-education, and strengthening themselves by building self-confidence. The next target group, defined in the opening phase of the project, were members of the core team who realized the project. They are people with collective experience in various integration programs and who are interested in co-operations that consolidate various elements of the system in which they are involved. The project provides them with an ideal opportunity to put this into practice.

Though we succeeded in implementing the PreQual course curriculum with an official certificate, we had initially sought to achieve more—we hoped to

<sup>44</sup> The project partner Sofia entered the project cooperation after the first two phases.

provide job opportunities for each member through opening up networks with the internships and other professional contacts. There is, however, a realistic possibility that we will be able to achieve this in later sequences of the program. For a further sequence of the course, it is essential that contact to be kept with all of the project participants – i.e. with the certified migrant women, lecturers and partners.

### **Experiences and Feedback**

Unfortunately, they cannot be complete in the current context, as no evaluation discussion with the lectures has taken place.<sup>45</sup> On base of ongoing observations and individual reflection of the lecturers and team members who has observed and accompanied the process we gained some important findings:

There are significant differences in the popularity and efficiency of the individual blocks. It would be useful to process the future syllabuses and blocks in on the basis of this outcome. A consultation of the findings with partner countries will also be interesting, particularly in terms of their execution of the course as a reflection of the social context of migrants in each individual EU country.

The course that took place in the Czech Republic underscored the richness of the women participants' lives and professional experience. They were most interested in the subjects where they discovered completely new areas of knowledge, providing them with a great deal of space for interaction and exchange of perspectives. The "language barrier" was immensely popular issue; women in this unit were interested in the specificities of the Czech language in communication and were keen to learn what is "behind" certain phrases or words. All of them showed a great interest in a continuation of the course. The unit on "personality" showed that the women are highly self-confident and that they are very capable of naturally filtering and choosing from the impulses in their environment. At the moment, we are still processing the full range of reflection and feedback of those involved in the project.

The experiences made through the internships and excursions showed that the migrant women are indeed self-confident when interacting with clients and able to make use of and adapt their existing social skills to new environments. It is likely that the fact that most of the women are from the former Soviet Union block also played a role in this easy adaptation. In addition to their ability to actively negotiate what they will and will not do, they also showed a great capacity in making agreements with the workers of the host organizations, which included hospitals and social health care workers

### **The Central European context and specific of multicultural pedagogy**

The topic could be within the project discussed more. Our present experience showed that there is a communication gap between East, Central and West European environments, which has not yet been introduced as a topic in the course. From the point of view of the project realization, it is thinkable;

<sup>45</sup> The course only finished at the same time this publication was scheduled to appear

from point of view of a general idea and the project horizon, we consider it a deficiency.

The Czech Republic and more broadly Central Europe can be briefly described as:

We work with migrant women who have similar experiences with totality as we had, thus, some of communication barriers are not given, e. g. the barriers mentioned by Paolo Freire in his pedagogy.

- The partner principle is provided by the very common investment of the project workers as well as its participants – the common interest is one’s personal involvement and commitment to help oneself and others.
- Multicultural education primarily takes place in non-governmental sectors in our country, i.e. in domains based on independent citizen initiatives. Owing to its activities, multicultural education succeeded in becoming integrated into the school curricula. Especially for the younger generation working in the non-governmental sector, pedagogical communication techniques based on principles of partnership and reciprocity have now become a subject of discussion.
- The sector of social services largely covered by citizen-based associations in the non- governmental sector are in a similar situation. Most of the organizations included (social and health care service providers) often apply methods of community work and mostly follow the motto of “work with people is waiting.”

Although the associations will be stricken by the crisis, a lot of autonomous principles based on the very experience have been put into practice over the last 20 years. In summary, our recommendation is: to increase the role of the identity of Central European experience in the reflections involving the experiences across Europe.

## Conclusion

PreQual enabled the development of an education measure capable of stepping up to transform the highly-charged contemporary socio-political debates on care, migration and labor and provide a solution-oriented approach for migrant women. Building upon the experiences of the migrant women’s organization maiz, we were able to successfully and prominently place the needs of the target group migrant women at the center and to integrate the global scale of the context into the PreQual project. The outcome is a recognized concept that is capable of being implemented internationally. It has now been successfully realized and evaluated in seven EU countries. Throughout this program, we supported and encouraged numerous women and received confirmation from the local authorities that the measure will be able to continue in Austria. In the partner countries (Spain, Greece, Czech Republic and Hungary), similar initiatives are also in the planning phase. This is indeed a positive outlook toward working to bring improvements to the life realities of migrant women in Europe through providing further education programs that serve migrant women instead of merely serving Eurocentric and hegemonic interests.

At the same time, however, even with PreQual we find ourselves restricted within the confines of European legislation, which is strongly characterized by exclusion and structural violence against women. We are faced with regulations that ignore the worldwide phenomenon of women in migration. A situation that emerged, in part, as a response to the need and demand (push and pull factor) of the wealthy EU countries and culminates in polarizations and inequality. As the global migration of women increases to fulfill the needs of the service sectors (the so-called “care giving” with the highest concentration in home assistance, care and sex work), the amount of those living precariously also increases. The precarization of the labor market is linked to the economic reproduction of this stratification and to the profit made from the differences the stratification creates. The capitalist promise, that links a person’s performance to their level of income and success, remains a farce when we take a closer look at the structural frameworks that (also) shape migrant women’s everyday lives.

In our work, we experience the tremendous efforts migrant women are required to make in order to gain a foothold on the labor market. PreQual seeks to

provide these women with source of support and encouragement in finding gainful employment on the formal labor market. The organizations that have taken on the task of developing and implementing these programs do not seek to do this work without emphasizing the necessity that the following demands are met in order to bring about sustainable improvements for migrant women and their working situation on the EU labor market.

## We demand

- The right to freedom – the right to migration!
- Social and political equality beyond market-based interests!
- Equal access for migrants to the labor market, regardless of origin, status and duration of residence!
- Putting an end to hiding structural discrimination behind a veil of “cultural difference!”
- The promotion of autonomy and union-based, grassroots forms of representing migrant women’s interests on the labor market, particularly within the service sector—including care, care-giving and sex work!
- Stop placing the blame for the consequences of exclusionary practices and global contexts onto those affected by them!
- The promotion of a self-organization of migrant women through the provision of resources and inclusion in social and political structures and in decision-making processes!

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DemNet - Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights - Hungary  
Iepala - Instituto de Estudios Politicos Para América Latina y Africa - Spain  
Sofia - civic association for dialogue - Czech Republic

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For more information on the outcome and international experiences of PreQual, we recommend „PreQual steps,“ an electronic publication available in each of the partner countries' languages: German, Greek, Spanish, Czech and Hungarian on the webpage:

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## Project director

**maiz – autonomous centre by and for migrant women, Austria:** maiz is an organisation by and for migrant women and was created in 1995 out of the necessity for changes with regards to migrants' living and work situation in Austria and to strengthen political and cultural participation. In the knowledge that our role as protagonists is absolutely legitimate and through our work in various fields, we attempt to provide answers to the issues surrounding women's work migration. In the process, we explore and adapt theory and practice while developing a variety of new forms, methods and strategies. Our activities include education, legal and social counselling; family counselling; general counselling, street work and training for migrant women working in the sex trade; cultural work; public relations activities and research. Our activities are aimed to reach migrant women in general as well as refugees, asylum seekers and migrant women working in the sex trade. Moreover, the preparatory program for the high school leaving exams is also open to male migrant youth.

[www.maiz.at](http://www.maiz.at)



## Project partner

**Antigone – Information & Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non Violence:** Antigone is a non-governmental organisation based in Thessalonica with offices in Athens. Since 1995 it has been active in issues concerning human rights, ecology, peace and non-violent conflict resolution in close cooperation with the ecological movement in Thessalonica. To fulfil its mission of studying the abovementioned issues and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Antigone undertakes research and activity projects, disseminates relevant publications, organises round table discussions and issues press releases. [www.antigone.gr](http://www.antigone.gr).

**DemNet – Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights:** The Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights (DemNet Hungary), an Hungarian private foundation, works for the creation and strengthening of democratic civil sphere in Hungary and in South and Eastern Europe, in addition to other developing or disadvantaged regions of the world with special attention on sharing the Central European social-political-economic transition experiences. DemNet Hungary designed targeted programs for refugees and asylum-seekers to access information via the internet and to foster their integration to the local host communities. One of the major focus groups is the Roma minority, their institutions and forums of Roma legal defense and advocacy. [www.demnet.org.hu](http://www.demnet.org.hu)

**IEPALA – Instituto de Estudios Políticos Para América Latina y África** is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1955 as an academic institute that focuses on the intersection of education based on development studies, politics and interculturality. IEPALA supports migrant women's self-organizations as well as organizations that work for the development of their own countries. IEPALA has extensive experience in international co-operations [www.iepala.es](http://www.iepala.es)

**Sofia – civic association for dialogue:** Civic Association for Dialogue Sofia is a non-governmental organization in Prague founded in 2004 with the objective to initiate the establishment of a community center for women, to promote women's participation in community life, enhance mutual understanding, support and informal forms of assistance and self-support. Sofia offers free counseling and psychotherapy for women and their families, organizes information, cultural and educational activities. Sofia creates a space for intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and anticipates in the gender dialogue as a way of contributing to the process of dismantling discrimination and combating stereotypes. [www.cet-sofia.cz](http://www.cet-sofia.cz)



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