



ENHANCED SOCIAL WORKERS

Enhancing Intercultural Communication Skills
and Competences for Social Workers in the
Provision of Assistance to Forced Migrants

INTERCULTURALITY IN SOCIAL WORK:

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES



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Interculturality in social work: methodological guidelines

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CONCEPTS

Ethnic stereotype: a schematized image of one's own or another's ethnic community, which represents simplified knowledge of the psychological characteristics and behaviour of members of a particular nation.

Forced migrant: a person who has been forced to leave his or her country of origin and seek refuge in another country as a result of war, political repression or other humanitarian catastrophe. The term Forced Migrant is used deliberately, as it includes not only those with refugee status, but also those who have been granted asylum, subsidiary or temporary protection in the host country (Demidenko, 2019).

Culture (*Lat. cultura*): education, improvement, worship, human relationship to oneself, society and the environment, encompassing the individual's and society's self-understanding, identity, lifestyle, cosmological and ontological visions of the world, thinking, creativity, imagination, development of the mind and the soul (Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija, 2024).

Culture shock: emotional and physical discomfort, disorientation of an individual caused by entering a foreign cultural environment, encountering another culture (Oberg, 1960).

Cultural diversity means that there are many different cultures around the world today. Intercultural competence requires an awareness of one's own culture and the recognition that each culture offers only one choice among many possibilities. Cultural diversity and intercultural contact have become facts of modern life, and learning to live together in an increasingly globalized world involves the risk of cultural homogenisation and cultural fragmentation, meaning that everyone needs to be aware of cultural differences and the potential benefits of cultural change (UNESCO, 2013).

Intercultural communication is communication between people from different cultures. It involves exchange of information between people from different cultures.

The concept of interculturalism refers to what happens when members of two or more different cultural groups (of any size, at any level) interact or influence each other personally in various forms. A broad definition would include international political or economic interaction. (UNESCO, 2013).

Communication encompasses language and non-verbal behaviour, which covers everything from the use of sounds, movement, the perception of space and time to many aspects of material culture (food, clothing, objects, visual design, architecture) and can be understood as an active aspect of culture (UNESCO, 2013).

In this publication, the concept ***intercultural competence*** will be used, which refers to the interaction between individuals belonging to different backgrounds, both within a society and across national borders.

INTRODUCTION



These methodological guidelines have been developed in the framework of the project ENHANCED SOCIAL WORKERS – *Enhancing intercultural communication competences for social workers in the provision of assistance to forced migrants*, co-financed by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme, project No. 2023-1-LT01-KA210-ADU-000151010.

The methodological guidelines have been developed in a unique way—the partners of the project analysing the methods used by Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers in their work with forced migrants, taking part in a joint experiential learning intercultural activity, learning from each other, formulating the topics of the methodology, reflecting and applying the methods presented in the publication.

The project’s objectives are closely linked to current European trends: global migration, multiculturalism, diversity, intercultural communication and integration of forced migrants. Social work is inseparable from contemporary trends. In many cases, present-day social workers are becoming “key specialists” helping forced migrants to find their way in a new country, adapt and integrate. However, a “key specialist” does not only need professional knowledge and intercultural communication competence. Although the multicultural context of Europe is increasing the need for and interest in intercultural communication, the majority of social workers are still lacking these competences. The project ENHANCED SOCIAL WORKERS (hereinafter ESW) aims to address this need by proposing methodological guidelines for the development of intercultural communication competence. Enhancing social workers’ intercultural communication competence is closely linked to increased access of forced migrants to professional assistance and better integration into the host society. The specific objective of the ESW project is thus strongly linked to the support not only for the professionals (the target group) but also for the forced migrants, and thus contributes to the more global objective of tolerating diversity in European countries, minimising discrimination against national minorities and promoting integration.

TARGET GROUP

The direct target group and beneficiaries of these methodological guidelines are professionals in the field of social services: social workers, social educators, refugee mentors and other professionals providing assistance to forced migrants. These methodological guidelines are intended to equip them with the competences necessary to deal in a culturally sensitive and constructive way with the challenges of intercultural communication in the context of assisting forced migrants. According to research findings (Demidenko, Kondratavičienė, 2022), interculturally competent social workers become educators themselves, providing forced migrants not only with services that meet their basic needs, but also with social skills that empower them to integrate more successfully into their new society.

The indirect target group is forced migrants—people who have been forced to leave their home countries and seek refuge in another country as a result of war, political repression or other humanitarian catastrophes. Forced migrants and refugees are classified as a vulnerable group of migrants, with a high risk of social exclusion. In this respect, the successful integration process of forced migrants requires assistance from social workers. And social workers need to be adequately trained in intercultural communication.

The intended long-term impact of these methodological guidelines and of the whole project ENHANCED SOCIAL WORKERS (hereinafter ESW) is to develop a positive, non-discriminatory attitude towards multiculturalism, cultural diversity and the social integration of forced migrants into European societies.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

The aim of the project is to provide social workers assisting forced migrants with the opportunity to closely link the strategic objectives of both social work and education through the development of intercultural communication skills.

Links between several levels are observed. First of all, the fundamental aim of social work is to support those experiencing social exclusion. Forced migrants are one of the most vulnerable (UNHCR, 2012) groups to social exclusion. According to research (Bartkevičienė, Bubnys, 2012; Demidenko, 2019; Štuopytė, Demidenko, 2021), it is the social worker who usually becomes the “key person” who can help the forced migrant to find his/her way in the new society, to give advice, education, and help them to integrate. However, these functions require not only professional training (education), but also intercultural communication competence that is specific to working with forced migrants. Only social workers who are properly trained and continuously learning can provide quality services that meet the needs of forced migrants. This leads to the identification of a connection with another strategic goal of social work—highly qualified, continuously learning and developing social workers providing quality services.

The project activities are aimed at improving the intercultural communication competence of Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers through experiential education methods, recognised as the most appropriate (Gurova, Godvadas, 2015; Štuopytė, Demidenko, 2021). According to UNESCO (2013), all spheres of modern society (including the social sphere) have strong ties with global migration trends. Modern professionals (in this case, social workers) need to be culturally sensitive and competent. Intercultural communication skills are among the most essential when working with forced migrants from different countries, cultures and religions. The forms of the development of intercultural communication competence recommended by UNESCO (2013)—*“learning to know”, “learning to do”, “learning to be”*—reflect the project’s experiential education methods, enabling social workers to work with forced migrants in an intercultural context.

The project's objectives are closely linked to one of the key priorities of the Lithuanian and EU education policy—ensuring opportunities for lifelong learning. The State Progress Strategy “Lithuanian Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030” govern the key priorities of Lithuanian education policy. It sets out a vision for a smart Lithuania. Society has to become active, solidary and continuously educated. Each person must be open to change, creative and responsible (new teaching methods, exposure to other cultures, learning intercultural communication). Education policy is expected to bring people together (solidarity) to constantly and continuously develop (learning, developing new intercultural communication skills) in seeking individual, professional (social workers’ competences) and national success (activeness) ensuring equal opportunities. The indicators identified in the National Education Strategy are also in line with the EU’s ambition to increase lifelong learning. Thus, by implementing the objectives of the project, the Social Service Center of Jonava District, together with the Social Projects Institute and the Cypriot NGO KIBOTOS, are contributing to the implementation of the objective of the Lithuanian and the EU education policy—to increase the level of lifelong learning by providing the opportunity for Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers to learn new skills of intercultural communication, relevant to their professional field, using innovative experiential education methods.

Objectives:

- Preparation of international training programme for social workers providing assistance to forced migrants: “Empowerment of social workers assisting forced migrants through building intercultural communication skills”.
- Conduction of international training using innovative experiential education methods.
- Preparation of a publication on methodological guidelines for social workers working with forced migrants “Interculturality in social work: methodological guidelines”.
- Dissemination and promotion of project activities and results.

STRUCTURE (DESCRIPTION) OF THE ETHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

The project's ENHANCED SOCIAL WORKERS (hereinafter ESW) methodological guidelines programme consists of three modules:

Module 1: Development of intercultural communication competences

- ◆ Intercultural communication competence
- ◆ Elements of intercultural communication competence
- ◆ Possibilities of using experiential education methods in the development of intercultural competences

Module 2: Psychosocial characteristics of forced migrants

- ◆ Forced migrants as a socially vulnerable client group
- ◆ Trauma and its impact on work with forced migrants

Module 3: Practical guidelines for the application of methods

- ◆ Study presentation on the experience of Cypriot and Lithuanian social workers in applying methods for working with forced migrants
- ◆ Possibilities of using group methods of intercultural cognition
- ◆ Possibilities of using metaphorical cards
- ◆ Opportunities for the application of alternative communication methods

The first module explains the theory of interculturality, its basic concepts and ideas. The chapters in this module introduce learners to the elements of intercultural communication competence, address the issue of ethnic stereotypes and attitudes, and outline the experiential education approach. It is recommended to allocate 8 hours for this method.

The second module covers the psychosocial characteristics of forced migrants, looking at forced migrants from the perspective of a socially vulnerable client group, paying particular attention to the phenomenon of trauma and the impact of the consequences of traumatic experiences on the process of working with forced migrants. It is recommended to allocate 8 hours for this method.

The third module provides practical guidelines for the application of methods. It presents the experience of Cypriot and Lithuanian social workers in applying methods for working with forced migrants, the results of the study, and discusses the possibilities of using the metaphorical card method, alternative communication methods and group intercultural cognitive methods. The chapter includes practical examples of sessions based on experiential education methods, their objectives and descriptions of their process. It is recommended to allocate 8 hours for this method.

It should be noted that this methodological material is only a recommendation. The materials and methods presented should not be taken literally. It is recommended to apply them considering the specific context of social work with forced migrants and the individual needs of professionals and forced migrants.

**MODULE 1:
DEVELOPMENT OF
INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION
COMPETENCES**



INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

European societies have always been heterogeneous, and yet the increasing number of immigrants has created new problems, such as how to live together and how to accept each other in democratic societies while respecting pluralism (Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius, 2023). Migration dynamics have become more complex in an interconnected world. In 2020, an estimated 281 million people (3.6% of the world's total population) lived outside their home country. This figure, defined as global international migration, is almost twice as high as in 1990.¹

For different people migration—living in several countries and leaving home for one reason or another—evokes different transformation of self-perceptions, relationships and experiences. Deardorff (2015) points out that interacting with customers, colleagues and foreign partners is now an everyday activity for many workers around the world, and employers are therefore seeking employees who are not only technically proficient, but also culturally literate and able to function in a intercultural environment. It is important for social workers to develop intercultural competences when working with the socially vulnerable group of forced migrants or their members. Intercultural communication is essential in recognising the cultural diversity of the world, which is why intercultural communication competence has become a priority. Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius (2023) claim that intercultural integration is a reciprocal process involving individuals, their communities and society as a whole. It consists of effective, positive and sustainable diversity management policies that aim to help society to realise the potential of diversity within an inclusive human rights framework.

The importance of intercultural competence is increasingly being emphasised in various disciplines and subjects and included in accreditation standards. Deardorff (2015) points out that in the United States, for instance, the following professional disciplines include intercultural or global competence in their accreditation standards: engineering, education, nursing, social work, medicine and business.

¹ European Commission, (2023). Knowledge for Policy: Increasing significance of migration https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/increasing-significance-migration_en

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

Intercultural competences are the abilities to function appropriately in a complex environment characterised by an increasing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles. It is the ability to “function effectively when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 5). Different conceptualizations of intercultural competence and the associated constructs make it necessary to delve deeper into some of the components of intercultural competence.

Intercultural competences, as Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius (2023) suggest, are transformative. They aim to promote structural changes in institutions (e.g. social service institutions) in order to address the causes of inequalities, discrimination, exclusion, lack of recognition and respect for diversity, and the lack of spaces for interaction in contemporary societies. Intercultural competences are necessary in order to design, implement and evaluate intercultural policies and to enable administrations to adapt their services to the socio-cultural realities of the local area.

Wolff and Borzikowsky (2018) identify that *intercultural competence* (ICC) is becoming increasingly relevant in contemporary society due to phenomena such as globalisation, intercultural cooperation and migration. Wolff and Borzikowsky (2018) note that over the last 60 years, scholars from different fields have been exploring the concept of intercultural competence, emphasising that intercultural competence is a heterogeneous construct that encompasses a multitude of dimensions that are necessary to interact appropriately and effectively with people from other cultures. The authors underline that the conceptualisation of intercultural competence is further complicated by the diversity of terminology that has emerged in the field and by some similar concepts (Wolff, Borzikowsky, 2018). Some terms, such as *intercultural communicative competence* or *cross-cultural competence*, are used synonymously. There are other concepts that are related to intercultural competence but differ from it in some nuances. For example, Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) introduced the concept of *intercultural sensitivity* as “the ability to distinguish and experience relevant cultural

differences” (p. 422). Greater intercultural sensitivity is considered to be associated with a greater potential for the realisation of intercultural competences and is essential for their development (Hammer et al., 2003). (Hammer et al., 2003). On the other hand, the concept of *inter-cultural adaptation* emphasises the process of behavioural change in response to culturally different environments. While successful intercultural adaptation requires the adoption of behaviours that achieve goals and perform tasks, this concept describes the outcome of intercultural competence rather than the ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures (Wolff, Borzikowsky, 2018).

The concept of intercultural competence is related to the concept of *cultural intelligence*, which is defined as an individual’s ability to function and cope in culturally diverse environments. Unlike intercultural competence, cultural intelligence is understood as a form of intelligence and depends on a number of genetic and personality-related components of intelligence (Wolff, Borzikowsky, 2018). This diversity of conceptualisations leads to a variety of strategies for teaching intercultural competences.

Intercultural competences develop the ability to convey information about one’s own culture when interacting with people from other cultures, as well as to interpret information about the other and one’s culture. Typically intercultural competences are gained through a combination of experience, training, and self-reflection. Despite the fact that much of what becomes intercultural competences can be acquired through personal experience, many programs have been designed to provide formal teaching, and they often help substantially. It is important for every social worker to understand one’s own culture. Understanding cultures as human constructs is a necessary step in learning how to interact interculturally (Training Programme for the Development of Intercultural Communication Competences, 2021).

Deardorff (2015) identifies generic skills that are related to intercultural competences:

- ◆ Ability to communicate in a second (foreign) language
- ◆ Ability to understand gender equality issues

- ♥ Ability to seek, process and analyse information from different sources
- ♥ Ability to work in a team
- ♥ Ability to work internationally
- ♥ Interpersonal and communication skills
- ♥ Ability to act in a socially responsible and civic-minded manner
- ♥ Ability to appreciate and respect diversity and multiculturalism
- ♥ Ability to use information and communication technologies
- ♥ Ability to adapt and act in new situations
- ♥ Ability to understand the cultures of other countries

Deardorff (2015) argues that these skills can be integrated into intercultural competences, but it is even more important to include specific aspects of intercultural competence. The author states that a major challenge for educators is to dispel the myths about intercultural competences that exist in the academic community (Deardorff, 2015). The researcher argues that there are many myths about intercultural competence development, including the following:

Myth 1 – international experience means intercultural competence.

Myth 2 – Intercultural competence is self-evident and cannot be taught.

Myth 3 – intercultural competence is not so important in my discipline.

Myth 4 – being fluent in another language is an indication of intercultural competence.

Myth 5 – intercultural competence cannot be evaluated.

According to Deardorff (2015), all these myths of intercultural competence can be dispelled through different training programmes, and intercultural competence can be evaluated in terms of specific learning outcomes using a variety of methods. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that intercultural competence goes beyond language and knowledge of other cultures only, and to acknowledge that skills and

attitudes are equally important for developing intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2015).

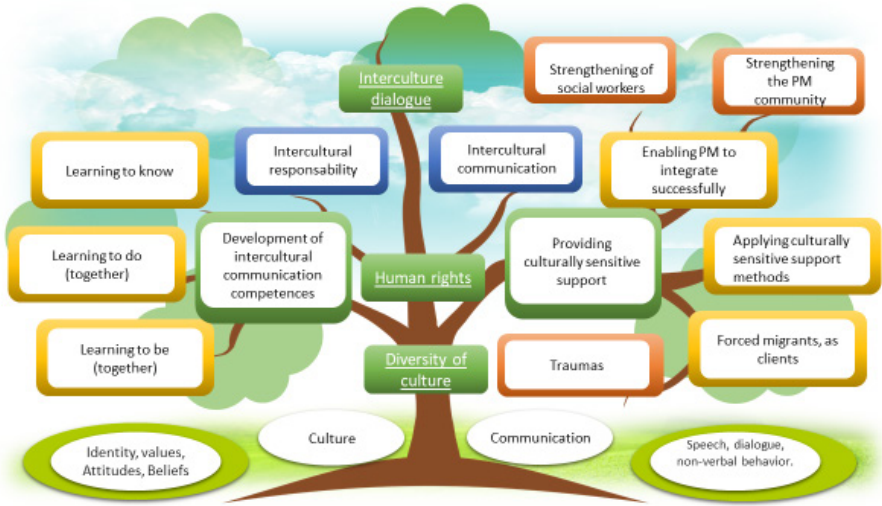


Fig. 1 The tree of intercultural competences in the context of working with forced migrants

ELEMENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Deardorff (2006, 2015) provides a research-based definition of intercultural competence that identifies the essential elements of intercultural competence:

♥ **Attitudes.** There are three identified attitudes: respect, openness and curiosity (Deardorff, 2015). Respect for others implies that they are valued, including showing interest in them and listening attentively. It is particularly important to respect those whose beliefs and values may differ from one’s own. Openness and curiosity imply a willingness to take risks and go beyond one’s comfort zone. These three attitudes are foundational for the further development of the knowledge and skills needed for intercultural com-

petence. One of the ways to pursue these essential attitudes is to question their assumptions about their own view of the world and how they perceive others. This shift of assumptions can be done through the training programme, particularly through experiential learning opportunities where learners actively engage with members of the local community (Deardorff, 2015).

- ♥ **Knowledge.** The intercultural researchers in Deardorff (2006) study reached consensus on the following categories of knowledge: *cultural self-awareness* (i.e. how culture has influenced one's identity and worldview), *culture-specific knowledge*, *deep cultural knowledge* (including an understanding of other worldviews) and *sociolinguistic awareness*. It is important to mention that for the purposes of this discussion, culture is defined as the values, beliefs and norms of a group of people that determine how individuals communicate and behave, i.e. how they interact with others. Culture does not necessarily refer only to individuals of different national or ethnic origins, but also to other different groups (religious, socio-economic, gender, sexual orientation, regional) within a given society. According to Deardorff (2006, 2015), the only element on which all the intercultural researchers in the study agreed was the importance of understanding the world from the perspective of others.
- ♥ **Skills.** Deardorff (2006, 2015) identifies the skills as part of a shared understanding of intercultural competence, which are related to the *processing* of knowledge: observing, listening, evaluating, analysing, interpreting and relating. This coincides with the observation made by the former President of Harvard University on the importance of "intercultural thinking". In light of these skills, critical self-reflection is essential for developing and assessing intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2015).
- ♥ **Internal personal outcomes.** These attitudes, knowledge and skills determine the internal outcomes of a person including flexibility, adaptability, ethnorelative perspective and empathy, the latter becoming the main axis of intercultural competence. These internal changes in the individual are the result of acquired attitudes, knowledge and skills and are essential for intercultural

competence. If these internal outcomes are achieved, individuals are able to understand other people's perspectives and to react according to how the other person wants to be treated. Depending on the intercultural knowledge and skills acquired, individuals may achieve this outcome with varying degrees of success.

♥ **External outcomes.** A combination of attitudes, knowledge and skills, and internal outcomes, as demonstrated by a person's observable behaviour and interactions in an intercultural situation. What is important is how effectively and appropriately the person interacts with other people in intercultural interactions.

Summarising the results of the study, Deardorff (2015) highlights that intercultural competence is the *effective* and *appropriate* behaviour and communication in intercultural situations, where *effectiveness* is determined by the person and *appropriateness*—by the other person(s) involved in the interaction. Effectiveness (the degree to which a person achieves one's goals) is only one half of the intercultural equation, the other half being appropriateness. This definition is based on the indispensable elements of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Intercultural communication takes place between people who speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication refers to the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, often by using a second or intermediate language, simplifying language use, or conveying meanings more clearly. These skills are necessary both for migrants and the local population, especially professionals providing reception of the migrants and integration support services—in general, those who interact directly with users of public services.

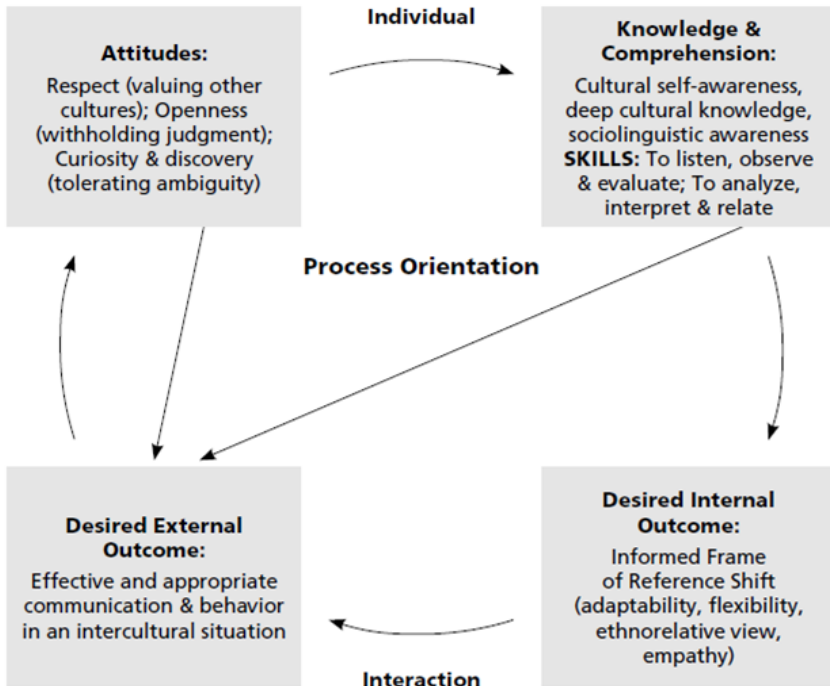


Fig. 2 Process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2015)

Deardorff's (2015) theoretically based model provides a number of important considerations that are relevant to the development of intercultural communication competence.

- ♥ **Firstly**, development of intercultural competence is an ongoing process and it is important that individuals are given opportunities to reflect and evaluate their development of intercultural competence over time. Furthermore, evaluation should be integrated into all targeted intervention measures.
- ♥ **Secondly**, critical thinking skills are very important (in the Skills module), as they allow the individual not only to acquire but also to evaluate knowledge. This means that the assessment of critical thinking could also be an appropriate part of the assessment of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2015).

- ♥ **Thirdly**, attitudes, in particular respect (which manifests itself differently in different cultures), openness and curiosity, are central to this model and influence all other elements of intercultural competence. Thus, it is important to pay attention to the assessment of attitudes (Deardorff, 2015).
- ♥ **Fourthly**, knowledge alone is not enough to develop intercultural competence, as the development of intercultural thinking skills becomes more important than knowledge (Deardorff, 2015).
- ♥ **Fifthly**, all the experts on intercultural cooperation in this study agreed on only one aspect, namely the ability to view the world from other's perspectives (Deardorff, 2015).

Exploring intercultural perspectives (even how differently a subject is taught in the world, such as Mathematics) and being able to understand other worldviews is becoming an important part of intercultural communication. It is also important to take into account definitions of intercultural competence. *"For example, from a South African perspective, the concept of Ubuntu (African humanism) emerges as a key element of intercultural competence. Other cultures may also focus more on the relationship than the individual"* (Deardorff, 2015). *Which definition(s) of intercultural competence will be used in the field of social work and in each region of the world? What will this definition be based on?* These questions need to be answered at the beginning of the process of the development of intercultural communication competences.

Intercultural communication competence refers to the ability to understand and interpret the verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication, taking into account the cultural background of the interlocutors. They include skills such as listening and observation, adapting and changing communication styles, linguistic, communicative and multilingual skills, as well as empathy, flexibility and adaptability. Written and visual communication is also important in the development of a communication campaign for public and private services aimed at achieving the objectives of different populations.

Communication is important for the development of this competence. It should be noted that communication in this case is not only between individuals, but also between systems, which are understood as

communication partners. The groups that exist within the mainstream culture are called subcultures: ethnic, religious, professional, etc. The main factors that lead to intercultural differences are: cultural history; cultural individuality, material culture, art; language and cultural stability; faith cultures; non-verbal behaviour; perception of personal space; perception of time; recognition and achievements; and patterns of thinking (Baršauskienė, Janulevičiūtė-Ivaškevičienė, 2007). Failure to appreciate cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings in the communication process. In order to reduce the risk of potential intercultural conflicts, it is necessary to develop intercultural communication skills.

CULTURE SHOCK

When people from several cultures come into contact, they naturally experience psychosocial changes of varying degrees of severity, defined in the mid-twentieth century as culture shock. Culture shock is the emotional and physical discomfort and disorientation of an individual as a result of being exposed to an alien cultural environment and encountering another culture (Oberg, 1960).

The term “culture shock” is used to describe a situation in which a person has to adapt to a new paradigm in which previously held cultural values and patterns of behaviour are not effective (Demidenko, 2019). The conflict between existing and new cultural norms and value orientations is caused by the fact that most people do not really perceive themselves as representatives of a particular culture. Within the boundaries of one’s own culture, a clear illusion of a worldview is created, which we perceive at a subconscious level as the only one possible. It is only when one leaves one’s own culture and is confronted with a different way of seeing the world that one is able to grasp the peculiarities of one’s own worldview. Representatives of both dominant and non-dominant culture groups experience culture shock in different ways (Demidenko, 2019).

Several factors of the intensity of culture shock are distinguished. Internal: gender, character traits, age, previous experience, motivation for

adaptation, professional competence (language, ability to learn), tolerance of social diversity, etc. And external factors such as cultural distance, representative of individualistic or collectivist society, migrants' integration systems in the host society (Dutton, 2012).

Oberg (1960), the originator of the concept of culture shock, identified six key symptoms of culture shock:

- ◆ The tension created by the person's psychological adaptation efforts;
- ◆ Sense of loss (of status, friends, homeland, profession, wealth);
- ◆ Sense of mutual exclusion (from the host culture and the newcomer's culture);
- ◆ Restructuring of the role system, difficulties in understanding oneself, one's values and feelings;
- ◆ Anxiety caused by various feelings (surprise, rejection, resentment) arising in the process of understanding cultural differences;
- ◆ Feelings of inferiority as a consequence of not being able to cope with the new situation.

In Oberg's traditional model, the process of culture shock is presented in a U-shape consisting of three phases: the honeymoon, frustration (crisis) and adjustment (Oberg, 1960). Contemporary academic literature (Dutton, 2012) refers to four phases, which in turn consist of several stages:

- ◆ The "honeymoon" stage (expectations, hopes, "...we went to Europe...");
- ◆ The anxiety and hostility stage (the critical stage – a period of disillusionment, the quest for marginalised contact with "insiders". Hypercritical – hypersensitivity to differences, difficulties; psychoemotional and psychosomatic disorders);
- ◆ Adjustment stage (optimism stage – more self-confident, able to function independently in the new environment, often able to accept the "strange" aspects of the new environment with humour,

to laugh at others' reactions to oneself and one's own reactions to others);

- ♦ Bicultural stage (partial adaptation and full adaptation stages).

Many authors identify biculturalism as one of the key indicators of successful integration. A person assimilates the basic values and rules of behaviour of the host culture, functions independently in the new society, but is able to maintain his/her national identity and actively participates in the life of both one's own and the new culture. According to researchers, culture shock in "small doses" has a positive impact on personal growth. Critical doses of culture shock can lead to negative ethnic stereotypes.

ETHNIC STEREOTYPE

It is a schematized picture of one's own or another ethnic community, outlining a simplified knowledge of the psychological characteristics and behaviour of the members of a particular nation.

It is the basis for a strong and emotionally charged opinion of one nation about another nation and about ourselves. These ethnic stereotypes can lead people towards subjective conclusions and unfair treatment of people from other ethnic groups. Research studies are being carried out to examine ethnic stereotypes (e.g. providing a list of adjective and asking people to classify them as belonging to different nationalities: Americans, English, Italians, Chinese, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Russians etc.). In Lithuania, studies on ethnic stereotypes are also conducted, albeit sparsely. A study comparing ethnic stereotypes of Lithuanians and Chechens was carried out in 2006 (Martišius, Berezna), the results of which are presented in Figure 3:

The aim was to determine whether ethnic stereotyping would be present in the evaluation of the article and the competence of the author. The evaluation of the article was more positive when the ethnicities of the evaluator and the evaluated coincided.

Lithuanians working with Chechens and more familiar with Chechens were more likely to evaluate the Chechen authors' article favourably than Lithuanian readers who did not know Chechens. It is worth noting that there is no statistically significant difference between the stereotyping of Lithuanians and Chechens, i.e. both nationalities tend to stereotype people of other nationalities.

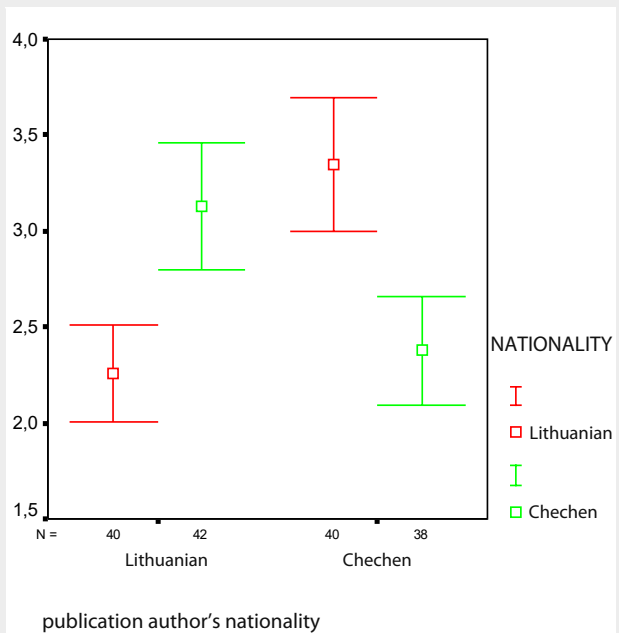


Fig. 3 Comparison of Lithuanian and Chechen ethnic stereotypes (Bereznaja, 2006)

For social workers working with forced migrants, it is important to be able to reduce the impact of ethnic stereotypes, hence the question: how can we reduce the impact of ethnic stereotypes in social work with forced migrants?

Direct interpersonal contact is one of the key ways to reduce stereotypes. The direct experience of interpersonal communication creates positive conditions for attitude change, which in turn leads to behavioural change.

It is noteworthy that the principle of "rebound effect" is also known, i.e. a change in behaviour can lead to a change in attitudes. If representa-

tives of different nations have negative attitudes towards each other, it is recommended to create favourable conditions for their direct interpersonal communication (Nalčadžian, 2004). The aim is for them to get to know each other through direct contact, to discover each other's positive qualities in joint activities, to gain new experiences of intercultural communication and to move beyond ethnic stereotypes.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT'S RESEARCH ON THE COMMUNICATION ATTITUDES OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Attitudes and the ethnic stereotypes discussed above play an important but often underestimated role in intercultural communication. In this context, ESW project study was carried out to examine the communication attitudes of Cypriot and Lithuanian social workers working with forced migrants. The study consisted of 3 parts: psychodiagnosis of communication attitudes before the training; participation of Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers in the Erasmus+ international training using experiential education methods; psychodiagnosis of communication attitudes after the training.

Psychodiagnostics adaptation of communication attitudes was used in the study, with questions in Lithuanian and English – languages which the participants understood. Findings of the study were analysed according to the psychodiagnostic methodology of communication attitudes, distinguishing several dimensions and focusing on changes in the key dimension – attitude towards forced migrants – before and after the training. It should be noted that before the training the majority of social workers had an average level of general communicative tolerance. This reflects a common attitude towards other people, general preferences that are determined by their own experiences, values and attitudes. Similar results emerged in the dimension of situational, professional communicative tolerance. However, the level of typical communicative tolerance – showing preferences towards groups such as immigrants, people with disabilities, people of different nationalities – was below average, i.e. the identification of certain negative attitudes towards forced migrants.

The level of social workers' general communicative tolerance increased

(in both Cypriot and Lithuanian social workers' groups) after participation in training in intercultural communication skills based on experiential education methods. General preferences of the participants became more positive. The impact of the training on the dimension of typical communicative tolerance was identified: after the new experience of intercultural education, the proportion of negative attitudes, especially towards working with forced migrants, decreased.

POSSIBILITIES OF USING EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION METHODS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCES

Intercultural communication competences are not innate or automatically acquired; they need to be developed, practised and maintained. The process of strengthening these competences requires the creation of conditions and methodologies to foster them. Developing intercultural communication competence requires working on people's attitudes and behaviour in intercultural interactions. This means seeking to change people's attitudes by encouraging learners to question the underlying assumptions of their cultures. For these reasons, experiential learning methodologies can be used in the development of intercultural competences (Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius, 2023; Piaget, 1977; Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 1997²).

The identification of the needs and aspirations of newcomers' linguistic, ethnic or cultural minority groups should not be neglected when planning the development of intercultural communication competences. Some ethnic groups may have similar needs to other groups, while others may have specific needs, particularly in relation to issues such as schooling, educational services, employment, belief and places of worship. Recognition of groups' cultural identities is essential to activate any consultation and/or participation processes or to seek representation on specific issues (Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius, 2023).

Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius (2023) argue that developing intercultur-

² Experiential learning: Experience at the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall. Dewey, J. (1997), Experience and Education

<https://www.schoolofeducators.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/EXPERIENCE-EDUCATION-JOHN-DEWEY.pdf>

al communication competence is not primarily a matter of learning about other cultures, but of becoming aware of one's own cultural identity, of understanding how our culture(s) influence our behaviour and how we develop relationships with others. The intercultural approach recognises that people's cultural identities are multidimensional, or intercultural and dynamic. Indeed, cultural identity is influenced by how people associate meanings with characteristics such as ethnicity, culture, language, as well as age, gender, disability, class, religious beliefs, etc. This first step of self-knowledge of one's cultural identity is essential to acknowledge that one's own culture and worldview is not unique and that others may have different cultural perspectives. This is a prerequisite for accepting and respecting diversity. At this stage, it is important to ask questions such as: *"Why do we behave this way and not that way?"*, *"Why do we perceive each other in a certain way?"*, *"How does our cultural perspective affect the relationship between the newcomers and the population?"* (Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius, 2023).

According to Kolb's learning cycle (1984) (cited in Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius, 2023), teaching activities aimed at developing intercultural competences should go through four stages. Consequently, at each stage, you can answer a series of questions that will help you understand whether your training activities facilitate participants' learning (Mauro, Sandu & Pacevičius, 2023):

- ♥ **Experience:** Does the proposed teaching activity help participants to build knowledge based on their existing experience based on their intercultural experience, on their experience of diversity within or outside the teaching group, or on examples from their life experience?
- ♥ **Reflection on experience:** Does the proposed activity provide an opportunity to reflect on and relate participants' personal learning journeys and to understand their own and others' reactions and attitudes to these experiences?
- ♥ **Conceptualization:** Does the proposed activity help participants to explore a concept or a framework, to make sense of the reflection by relating it to existing intercultural or culture-specific concepts or frameworks?

♥ **Experimenting:** Does the proposed activity help learners to apply a concept in a pragmatic and relevant way, which provides a new experience to reflect on? For example, trying out a new model of conflict resolution, or practising a new behaviour to better adapt to another culture, or performing differently in a similar situation, thus moving forward in one's field of expertise (Mauro, Sandu & Pacevicius, 2023).

The main tools for experiential learning are small group activities, exercises, games, simulations, teamwork projects, storytelling and self-reflection activities, best practice examples or case studies, etc. Small and large group interactions and conversations activate and harness the diversity and intercultural dialogues of the training participants, thus fostering the development of their intercultural competences (Mauro, Bolzani, 2020).³

The learning environment must contribute to building trust through meaningful intercultural interactions. Fostering an environment of mutual trust and sharing will create a culture of openness and an environment of meaningful exchange. Ensuring that the teaching/learning process is participative and that all participants are accepted as equals requires giving them more ownership of the learning process, increasing the likelihood of long-term learning. The educator/trainer should take the following points into account:

- ♥ Create a judgement-free environment: all opinions are fair and important.
- ♥ Accept participants' feelings and experiences and avoid stereotypes, prejudices, judgements or opinions.
- ♥ Involve participants in interactive and engaging activities (exercises, discussions). Allow participants to discover and feel, rather than explain, what inclusion or exclusion is.
- ♥ Encourage dialogue and mutual listening, ensuring that everyone can speak if they want to do so.

³ Mauro, di M. & Bolzani, D. "Neighbourness" competences: A literature Review. April 2020
http://mauradimauro.weebly.com/uploads/5/5/6/4/556436/neighborness_competences_a_literature_review_io1_report_final.pdf

- ◆ Encourage reflection among participants through open questions.
- ◆ Encourage participants to share examples and short stories. Not underestimate the opinions of participants.
- ◆ Avoid one-on-one discussions and ensure that the whole group participates in the discussions.

Participants' reactions during the training, their own cultural identities discovered during the interaction, their perception of multicultural group dynamics and the way in which participants or groups interact with each other can provide material for consideration and learning through trainer-led reflection. Educators/trainers play an important role in achieving learning outcomes by facilitating group activities, showing openness and respect for different opinions and points of view, assisting the reflection on participants' experiences and helping them to develop intercultural communication competence.

MODULE 2:
PSYCHOSOCIAL
CHARACTERISTICS OF
FORCED MIGRANTS



FORCED MIGRANTS AS A SOCIALLY VULNERABLE CLIENT GROUP

First of all, it is important to discuss the concept of forced migrant itself. It is worth noting that the choice of this term is not accidental. Forced migrants are different from other people who migrate around the world—forced migrants cannot return home. We are therefore talking about migrants who leave their country and seek refuge in another country for socio-political reasons (social unrest, military action, political persecution, etc.).

The term Forced Migrant is used deliberately and, because of its inherent broadness, covers not only those with refugee status but also those who have been granted asylum, subsidiary protection or temporary protection in the host country. In this context, a migrant with refugee status is a person who, because of persecution in one's country of origin, or because of the fear of such persecution, a person cannot rely on the defence of one's country of origin. Such persecution must be related to race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (Law of the Republic of Lithuania On the Ratification of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, 1997). Whereas an alien granted asylum is a migrant who, due to insecurity in one's home country, has been granted subsidiary or temporary protection in the country of asylum and has been issued a temporary residence permit (Law of the Republic of Lithuania On the Legal Status of Aliens, 2004).

The concept of forced migrant is broader, indicating that a person who is forced to leave one's country of origin goes through several stages of migration. First of all, the forced leaver becomes an emigrant (in relation to the country of origin). In transit migration, crossing the borders of different countries, the person experiences the role of a migrant. And, upon arrival in a particular country of asylum, the person becomes an immigrant (in relation to the host country). In the role of a migrant, a person may also be granted the status of a refugee, an alien with subsidiary or temporary protection status, depending on the legal specificities of one's application for asylum.

The Guidelines analyse the possibilities of developing intercultural communication competence in the context of social workers working with immigrants of different statuses, which is why the concept of Forced Migrants is used. It is noteworthy that the concept of forced migrants is most often used in research descriptions and in the works of scholars (Dermot, Benson, Dooley, 2008; Rodgers, 2004; Tuton, 2003; Macchiavello, 2003 et al.), when analysing people who are forced to leave their home country and seek asylum in another country due to social and political reasons.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FORCED MIGRANTS AS A SOCIAL EXCLUSION GROUP

Forced migrants is a socially vulnerable group. Demidenko (2019) draws on research (Spencer, 2004; Phillimore, Goodson, 2006; Gurung, 2011) to argue that despite the fact that individual migrants' experiences of integration are not homogeneous, the vast majority of migrants experience social exclusion. The overall integration experience of forced migrants (across different spheres) is less successful than that of the native population. This client group is socially vulnerable due to the marginalising feature of belonging to an ethnic, religious minority group.

Tatar (1998, 2015), analysing diversity in educational contexts, attributes belonging to immigrant, non-dominant ethnic, religious or linguistic groups as characteristics that lead to social exclusion. The analysis of data from research studies (Terzil, 2005; Kahan-Strawczynski, Levi and Konstantinov, 2010; Hernandez, Cervantes, 2011; Korem, Horenzyk, 2015) demonstrates social exclusion of young immigrants in educational institutions, a higher level of academic failure compared to the general population and a propensity for unsafe behaviour (school absenteeism, delinquent behaviour) (Demidenko, 2019).

The multidimensional concept of social exclusion is being actively developed in contemporary scientific literature (Spencer, 2004; Barnes, 2005; Fernández, 2014), distinguishing several levels of exclusion:

- ◆ Economic (poverty, unemployment)
- ◆ Legal (equal opportunities, political participation)

- ◆ Educational (accessibility of the education system, education characteristics of persons with special needs, reintegration of students who drop out of school, non-formal education through the community and community activities)
- ◆ Psychological-personal (alienation trends in interpersonal relations in the context of the development of scientific technologies)
- ◆ Socio-cultural

Within each of these levels, the individual's lack of participation (or diminished opportunities to participate) in the social, economic and cultural life of society is analysed.

Poverty is undoubtedly one of the key features of social exclusion, but other aspects of the process of social exclusion are also quite important: demographic vulnerability (intergenerational, age-related); low-paid work and unemployment; the characteristics of the place where people live (deprived areas, problematic neighbourhoods); physical and mental health problems; discrimination. In the context of the analysis of the social exclusion of forced migrants, it is important to consider the marginalising feature of belonging to an ethnic or religious minority group.

Research by Esser (2000), Major, Wilkinson, Langat, Santoro (2013), Montgomery, Foldspang (2008), Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė (2010), Žibas (2013a, 2013b) reveals the social exclusion of forced migrants, experienced through discrimination, as they are often subjected to the negative attitudes of the host society. Even societies with strong democratic traditions have negative stereotypes about forced migrants—they are perceived as a threat to the majority's culture, a burden on society, etc. Social exclusion and discrimination are identified in the labour market, education and healthcare.

Summarising the psychosocial characteristics of forced migrants and the characteristics of forced migrants as a socially excluded group, it is possible to draw a portrait of the forced migrant, also referred to as the "face of the migrant" by scholars (Spallek, Zeeb & Razum, 2011, Rechel, Mladovsky, Ingleby, Mackenbach, & McKee, 2013). A forced migrant is thus a person who has been forced to leave one's home country for

social and political reasons and has been granted asylum in another country. As a member of a socially excluded group, this person is characterised by certain traits:

- ♥ Belonging to an ethnic or religious minority
- ♥ Trauma and mental health problems
- ♥ Legal exclusion (lack of opportunities for political participation in the host society)
- ♥ Restrictions on participation in the labour market and low economic status
- ♥ Lack of social contacts in the host society
- ♥ Educational exclusion (drop-out of children of forced migrants from the mainstream education system, lack of access to higher education for forced migrants, lack of methodological teaching tools, etc.)
- ♥ Insufficient education or the one that does not fulfil the requirements of the host country
- ♥ Low social status as a result of forced migrant status (risk of belonging to marginal delinquent groups)

TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACT ON WORKING WITH FORCED MIGRANTS

Migration, as a process that a person has to go through, is *a priori* associated with traumatic experiences and the risk of psychological and psychosocial disorders. The high risk of migration is conditioned by the necessity of forced reconstruction of migrants' personal ties and social networks, the dangerous movement from one system (social, educational, cultural, economic) to another, and the change of systems (Kirmayer, Weinfeld, Burgos, du Fort, Lasry, Young, 2011). The migration process is often divided into three phases: pre-migration, migration and post-migration. It should be noted that each phase is associated with certain risk factors.

- ◆ The pre-migration phase is most often associated with disruptions in normal social roles and networks, loss of education and employment opportunities.
- ◆ The migration phase is characterised by feelings of loss of identity and uncertainty about citizenship. Many authors note the high risk of experiencing violence during this phase (illegal migration, detention, refugee centres). Depression and personality disorders are also often provoked or complicated (Steel, Silove, Brooks, Momartin, Alzuhairi & Susljik, 2006; Robjant, Hassan, Kattana, 2009).
- ◆ During the post-migration phase, when the host country has granted a certain status to the forced migrant, feelings of optimism and hope are often experienced. These feelings have a positive impact on the psychosocial well-being of the migrant in the initial phase of integration, but in the long run, due to difficulties in realising expectations, problems of adaptation to the new environment, structural barriers to integration, and often discrimination, they lead to depression, demoralisation, apathy and personality disorders in the group of forced migrant (Noh, Kaspar, Wickrama, 2007; Tran, Manalo, Nguyen, 2007).

TRAUMA IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERCULTURALISM

In this publication, we analyse the phenomenon of trauma in the context of interculturalism. According to Maercker, Heim and Kilmayer (2019) a culturally sensitive perspective is the most promising way to understand the diversity of the trauma phenomenon. Culture is an integral part of mental health because the individual is inseparable from culture and social environment. Many contemporary trauma and mental health experts emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive care in their research and articles:

- ◆ Kirmayer and Gómez-Carrillo (2019) discuss the importance of applying an ecosocial approach in mental health theory and practice;
- ◆ Hinton and Bui (2019) present the intercultural model for the analysis of trauma-related disorders when analysing the phenomenon of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD);

- ◆ Gross and Killikelly (2019) introduce the concept of sociosomatics, etc. Recent research has shown that even the experience of trauma-related grief and loss is influenced by cultural context.

In the 21st century, professionals are increasingly talking about culturally responsible care (especially in the intercultural context). Definitions of culture change over time, but the human connection to culture does not disappear. This is why the modern concept of mental health is also inseparable from culture as a matrix of social experience. It encompasses all the socially constructed aspects of life that shape neurodevelopment, daily functioning, self-perception and perceptions of illness and health. While some aspects of culture are explicitly defined as norms, values, ideologies and practices, much of culture is implicit, comprising a taken-for-granted system of knowledge and beliefs. Implicit culture may only become apparent during cultural change or intercultural encounters. In refugee assistance practices, cultural differences are often manifested in characteristic behaviour, ethnicity or national origin. These forms of identity are cultural constructs themselves based on norms and conventions (Maercker, Heim and Kilmayer, 2019).

Thus, we are convinced that culturally sensitive principles are essential when providing assistance to traumatised forced migrants. In the refugee assistance process, a focus on culture serves several functions:

1. It can help refugees to communicate their concerns in forms that are close and meaningful to themselves, their families and their communities.
2. It can aid professionals in interpreting the diagnostic significance of forced migrants' symptoms and behaviours, and in assessing forced migrants' preconceptions in relation to relevant norms and contexts.
3. It can assist in the development of culturally appropriate support plans and interventions.
4. Cultural sensitivity is essential for successful outcomes and adequate evaluation of interventions.

In this respect, professionals working with forced migrants need intercultural communication competence and a basic knowledge of trauma

and the current adaptation process of forced migrants. It is important to note that past trauma is compounded in the process of re-victimisation, when integration difficulties are encountered. Arriving in a foreign country, forced migrants have to overcome a psychological crisis. According to Kirmayer et al. (2007), a crisis is a particular mental state of a person when facing a life situation in which one's experiences and responses are no longer sufficient to understand what is happening, to socialise and to cope. This is the situation that forced migrants often have to face when they arrive in a foreign country: a foreign language, different rules of behaviour, different educational requirements, different labour market needs. In this scenario, the skills, knowledge and abilities of forced migrants are no longer sufficient for their independent functioning and integration in the local host communities. Findings by Sirin, Rogers-Sirin (2015) show that the first generation of immigrants is extremely vulnerable (compared to the general population or other generations of immigrants), experiencing high levels of acculturation stress, and suffering from severe mental health disorders.

World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2006), in its research on the psychosocial problems of forced migrants, stresses that the entirety of their past, present and foreseeable situation is experienced in a transition from one phase to another. Five phases of the refugee crisis can be distinguished:

1. Catastrophe (the world seems to be falling apart, total despair).
2. Self-determination (decision to flee the country).
3. Dissociation (forced migrants describe this feeling as "floating in the air", without a clear understanding of the situation, a sort of oblivion).
4. Confrontation and reaction (there is a time to come to terms with one's own feelings, experiences and current situation. It often shows tendencies of aggression, anger).
5. The phase of reconciliation and new life.

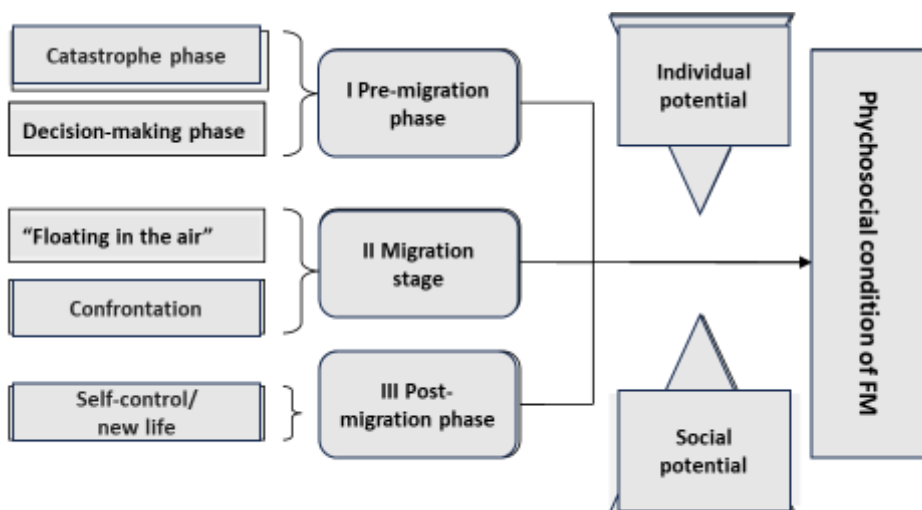


Fig. 4 Aspects of the psychosocial condition of forced migrants (Bereznaja-Demidenko, Štuopytė, 2013).

In order to reveal the psychosocial characteristics of forced migrants, it is necessary to address the issue of mental health disorders in this target group. Despite some uncertainty in the scientific community about the prevalence of mental health disorders in the forced migrant population (e.g. doubting whether 86% of the population is actually affected by mental health disorders (Fazel, Wheeler, Danesh, 2005), studies have shown that forced migrants, who have experienced war, repression, violence, hunger, discrimination and other similar traumas, have psychological problems and often suffer from illnesses such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and co-occurring mental disorders, neuroses, phobias, high levels of anxiety, and a variety of personality disorders (Pedersen, 2002; Murphy, Ndegwa, Kanani, Rojas-Jaimes, Webster (2002); Pitman, 2010; Kirmayer & Gómez-Carrillo, 2019; Gojer, Ellis, 2014). Meta-analysis of more than 20 studies (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005) found that:

- ◆ On average, one in five adult forced migrants admitted in Western countries has post-traumatic stress disorder or trauma-related disorders (chronic pain, other psychosomatic disorders);

- ♥ On average, one in twenty adult forced migrants admitted in Western countries suffers from depression;
- ♥ On average, one in twenty-five adult forced migrants has generalised anxiety disorder.

Tens of thousands of forced migrants currently hosted in various countries (including Lithuania) suffer from a range of mental health problems, the most common of which is post-traumatic stress disorder.

Notably, there is a direct link between the experience of trauma and the persistence of specific symptoms. This link may be relevant even over a period of fifty years. Thus, even forced migrants living in a safe country of asylum are plagued by anxiety, depression, and chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (Pedersen, 2002; Gojer and Ellis, 2014).

Hence, the painful individual experiences of forced migrants at the micro-level are linked to processes of macro-level determinants such as integration, the right to education and equal participation in the new labour market and political life (Gojer, Ellis, 2014). Having experienced culture shock and re-victimisation due to adaptation difficulties, limited educational opportunities and lack of preparation for the labour market, forced migrants often become demotivated to integrate into a new society and suffer from mental health problems.

THE PHENOMENON OF TRAUMA AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Traumas and traumatic events can be very different. For structural purposes (Janoff-Bulman, 2002) , traumatic events are classified according to:

- ♥ Technogenic causes (accidents, industrial disasters, etc.);
- ♥ Natural causes (natural disasters, natural cataclysms);
- ♥ Socio-biological (military action, repression, terrorist attacks, suicide, violence, etc.).

The traumatic experiences of forced migrants are mostly related to traumas of natural and socio-biological causes. Trauma often leads to the risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Statistics

reveal that the likelihood of developing trauma-induced PTSD in specific groups such as forced migrants, war refugees and veterans, victims of natural disasters and victims of violence ranges from 58% to 82%. According to the International Classification of Diseases, currently being updated (ICD-11), post-traumatic stress disorder is a disorder that develops in the face of an extremely threatening or frightening experience, or a series of experiences. It is followed by a recurrent reliving of the event(s), with memories coming into consciousness in the form of images or dreams. Persistent avoidance of stimuli or situations that may resemble the traumatic event, hypersensitivity to environmental stimuli, which lasts for at least two weeks and disrupts the person's normal functioning quite significantly.

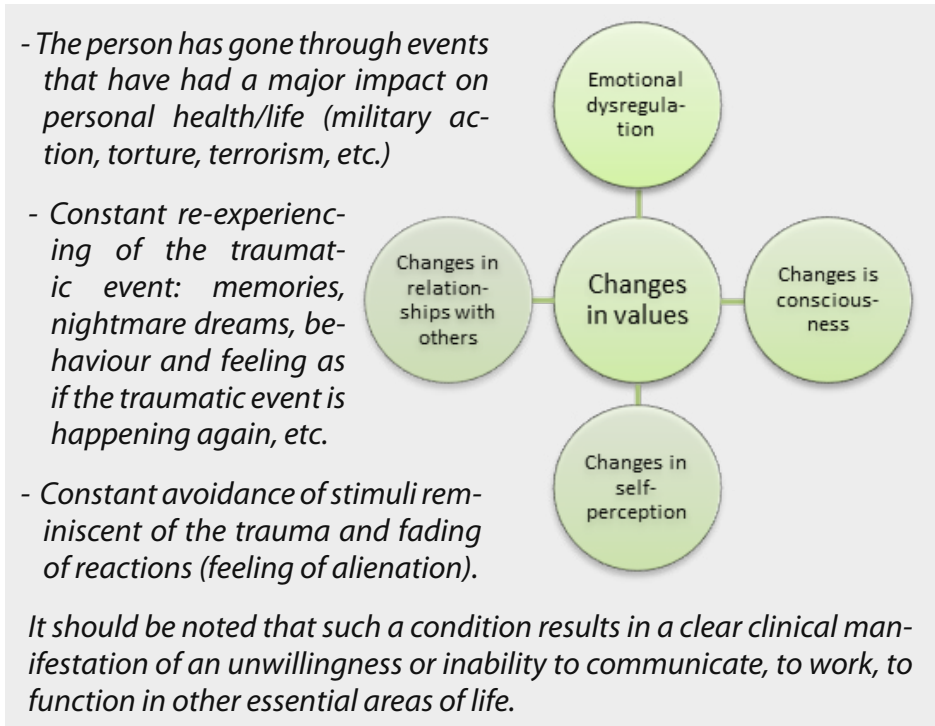


Fig. 5 Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

In 2018, the World Health Organisation added the diagnosis of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) to the International Clas-

sification of Diseases, 11th edition (ICD-11). CPTSD is characterised by trauma-induced stress manifested by both post-traumatic reactions, such as reliving the traumatic event in the present, avoidance, and a heightened sense of threat, and difficulties in personal organisation, such as problems with emotion regulation, identity, and relationships (Geleželytė, 2022).

To identify clients who may be diagnosed with PTSD as a result of trauma, it is important to be aware that these individuals are characterised by emotional dysregulation (frequent mood swings, emotional stability, etc.), changes in consciousness, changes in self-perception (“victimhood”, feelings of guilt and shame leading to low self-esteem, etc.), changes in values (as the events experienced are linked to existential aspects) and changes in relationships with others (impaired social activity, destructive relationships in the close environment, social isolation, etc.). Clients with PTSD also experience sleep disorders; increased irritability, possible anger attacks; difficulty concentrating; psychogenic amnesia (not remembering important aspects of the trauma); heightened levels of alertness, tension; and exaggerated startle reactions. Typical features are intrusive and repetitive *flashbacks*, dreams or nightmares of the stressful event, despite persistent emotional “numbness” and blankness of feeling, detachment from others, insensitivity to environmental influences, anhedonia and avoidance of traumatic events and situations. This is usually accompanied by increased agitation of the autonomic nervous system, manifested by increased irritability, increased fearfulness and insomnia. These symptoms often coexist with anxiety and depression, and suicidal ideation is also common. It should be noted that such PTSD condition impairs person’s ability to communicate, work, and otherwise function in other essential areas of life.

When providing psychosocial support to traumatised clients, it is important to understand that a fundamental feature of all traumatic events (violence, natural disasters, military actions, etc.) is the disempowerment and a certain separation of the victim from other people. Therefore, the provision of assistance must also be based on the return of power to the traumatised person and on the establishment of a new secure relationship. No intervention that takes power away from the

victim can be effective. The foundational powers of trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity and proximity, as well as the empowerment of the client, are crucial in the process of providing support to traumatised persons (Herman, 2006).

When providing support to traumatised people, it is important to understand one crucial aspect: *“real trouble begins when traumatic acts end”* (Gelbūdienė, Demidenko, 2021). It is not only the traumatic event itself as a phenomenon that is important—it is the extent of its damage. It is often only during the post-traumatic period that the degree of destructiveness of the traumatic event, the expression of psychosocial relationships and mental health disorders can be realistically assessed. This is why, in the contemporary context, the provision of psychological and social support to traumatised persons is becoming increasingly relevant. We hope that this publication will become a useful methodological tool in your challenging but meaningful professional activity.

When planning support for traumatised people, it is important to be aware that recovery occurs in three stages (Malkina-Pych, 2004, Herman, 2006):

1. Safety
2. Remembrance and mourning
3. Acceptance and return to everyday life

The process of providing help and recovery is not easy. Fluctuating and often contradictory, traumatic syndromes lead to defensive behaviour in clients, avoidance, instability, etc. However, successful complex psychosocial support aims at a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to consciously perceived memories, from stigmatised isolation to restored social relations with society (Gelbūdienė, Demidenko, 2021).

Obviously, the first step in helping a traumatised person is **ensuring safety**. This publication is not intended to address the issue of organising the physical security of the client. Psychosocial support professionals are certainly familiar with the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (No XI-1425), adopted in 2011, safe accommodation in

crisis centres and similar security measures. In the context of psychosocial support for trauma survivors, we emphasise security in terms of self-awareness, self-control and the creation of a safe environment. This is because trauma takes away the victim's sense of power, the belief that you are the master of yourself (your body, behaviour and thoughts) (Herman, 2006). Therefore, the main goal of the second phase is to help the client to **recall the traumatic memories** and to transform them in a way that the traumatised person is able to integrate them into one's life. The transformation of the traumatic event involves a variety of approaches from different strands of psychotherapy (some of which are reviewed in this chapter), but the essential feature of all these approaches is the **"confrontation" with the trauma**. Clients with PTSD usually seek to forget, to push away traumatic memories. The specialist's task is to help the client, in a safe psychotherapeutic environment, to recall and then transform these memories. For this purpose, the following methods are used (Malkina-Pych, 2004; Herman, 2006):

- ♥ "Story-telling" method
- ♥ "Testimonial" method
- ♥ "Letter writing"
- ♥ "Confession reading" and other methods

The essential aim of these methods is to help the client to remember, retell and describe the traumatic event in as much detail as possible and, above all, to see oneself in it, with a view to subsequent transformation.

The aim of traumatic transformation is to help the client, in a safe psychotherapeutic environment, to overcome the horror of the traumatic event by reliving the same experience, but using the "anti-traumatic potential" identified in previous consultations. Different psychotherapies highlight this potential in different ways. The discussion of the peculiarities of complex psychotherapeutic support for people who have experienced trauma highlights the relevance of training for all professionals. Not only psychologists, but also social workers, social pedagogues and educators need to be familiar with the methods of dealing with PTSD, understand the conditions of their application and

the principles of how they work.

The analysis of scientific literature on trauma (Kobasa, 1982; Green, 1990; Adshear, 2005; Malkina-Pych, 2004; Figley, 2014;) shows that the most common methods used to help people with trauma are:

- ◆ Psychoeducation and Rational Emotive Psychotherapy—where client’s awareness of the mechanisms of PTSD is increased;
- ◆ Mental self-regulation techniques—aiming to reduce symptoms of anxiety and tension (autotraining, rhythm therapy, relaxation, active visualisation of positive images);
- ◆ Cognitive psychotherapy to re-think disadaptive and irrational thoughts;
- ◆ Humanistic (person-centred) therapy to transform the client’s attitude towards the traumatic event and to take responsibility (not for the event itself, but for one’s attitude towards it, thus giving a sense of control over the situation);
- ◆ Positive therapy, Gestalt therapy—focusing not only on the problems, but also on the methods of coping with them, on the individual’s potential for overcoming the trauma.
- ◆ EMDR and other trauma-focused psychotherapies.

The principle of providing help is to restore a sense of power and security to the victim. To summarise all the approaches briefly presented in various branches of psychotherapy, it should be noted that the choice of a particular method of help is a decision between the client and the professional. Work with traumatised clients can be carried out both individually and in a group, using a variety of psychological and social support methods. However, regardless of the methods chosen, I would like to point out one universal law—in the process of helping a traumatised person **the relationship is the most important** (Spinelli, 2007, 2014). It has to be admitted that in our country psychological help is very often mystified. As if some magical methods are used that change the client and his life. There is no doubt that psychologists and psychotherapists are particularly important players in complex psychosocial assistance. Their knowledge and skills are specific, but the role of the

social worker, the social pedagogue, the educator in the process of providing assistance is also valuable. It is important that each provider has a clear understanding of the functions, work processes and methods of his or her colleagues, without creating unreasonable expectations for him or herself or the client. Most importantly, each professional should be able to establish a positive, constructive and empowering relationship with the traumatised client. The relationship is an essential condition for the recovery of mental disorders and returning to social functioning (Spinelli, 2007, 2014).

THE STAGE OF MOURNING FOR TRAUMA-INDUCED LOSS AND ACCEPTANCE

When working with traumatised clients, it is important to know that *trauma inevitably brings loss*. Those who have been physically traumatised (physical or sexual violence) lose their sense of bodily integrity. And those clients who manage not to be physically harmed still lose the internal psychosocial structures of the self in relation to other people. Trauma of any kind leads to a painful emotional vacuum, feelings of loss and emptiness. This leads to the need for another stage of psychosocial support—the promotion of constructive mourning.

According to Herman (2006), immersion in mourning is the most necessary, but also the most frightening stage of psychosocial support for traumatised clients. It should be noted that although mourning is a natural part of any bereavement (and we have already established that trauma is about loss and bereavement), it is often resisted by clients. Client resistance is caused not only by fear but also by irrational thoughts and attitudes. For some clients, mourning is like admitting that what has happened has defeated them. It is therefore very important to help the client to see mourning as an act of courage and wise resistance rather than an act of humiliation. It is only by mourning all that has been lost as a result of the trauma that the client discovers one's indestructible inner potential.

When the trauma has a socio-biological cause, an important task in the mourning period is to help the client to accept that retaliation and revenge are not contributing to healing. Fantasies of revenge further link

the client to the abuser. According to Herman (2006), it is important to help the client to understand that mourning, not revenge, helps the client to see a more abstract, more societal process of repairing the harm, one that is connected to existential values.

Mourning can frighten the client because of its characteristic of timelessness. Reconstructing the story of the trauma requires immersing oneself in a time that has stagnated in the past, and sometimes it seems that this mourning will last forever. However, after many repetitions, there comes a moment when the narration of the trauma story no longer evokes such intense feelings. Grief loses its intense colours (Herman, 2006). The traumatic event becomes a memory, painful, profound..., but a memory that does not condition the present. The client begins to realise that the trauma is only a part of one's life, not the whole life. The trauma no longer dominates, and the focus of the client's attention is increasingly shifted to everyday things.

When a client, thanks to psychosocial support, accepts his/her traumatic experience, rediscovers himself/herself, rebuilds the relationship with his/her environment that was destroyed by the trauma, and learns to be present in a meaningful way and to pursue his/her future goals, we are talking about a successful process of assistance.

MODULE 3:

**PRACTICAL
GUIDELINES FOR
THE APPLICATION
OF METHODS**



PRESENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDY ON EXPERIENCE OF CYPRIOT AND LITHUANIAN SOCIAL WORKERS IN APPLYING METHODS FOR WORKING WITH FORCED MIGRANTS

Within the framework of the project ENHANCED SOCIAL WORKERS (hereinafter ESW), an international study on the experience of Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers in working with forced migrants was conducted. The publication briefly presents some findings of the study, one of which is the identification of a portrait of the clients of Cypriot and Lithuanian social workers as forced migrants (see Figure 6).

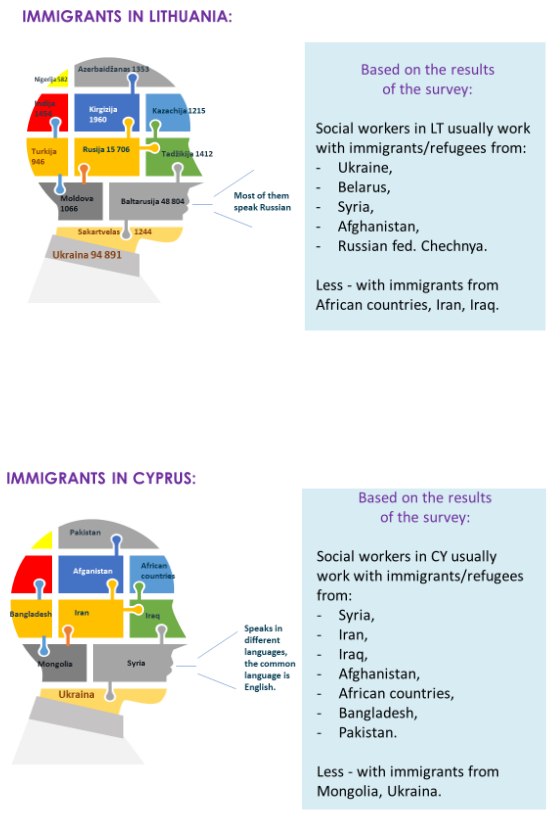


Fig. 6 Forced migrants with whom Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers work

The study also analysed the views of Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers on the cultural and psychosocial characteristics of forced migrants. No particular differences were identified in this dimension, with professionals in both countries noting that their clients being forced migrants:

- ◆ Are members of different cultures, and therefore support providers need to be culturally sensitive and competent. It should be noted that Lithuania has a larger number of Russian-speaking forced migrants, thus the language barrier problem is less than in Cyprus;
- ◆ The majority of forced migrants have a history of traumatic experiences and resulting mental health problems, the most common of which is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD);
- ◆ Forced migrants face challenges related to cultural adaptation, adjusting to new cultural norms and public expectations in the host country;
- ◆ Age groups of forced migrants can be diverse, including children, families and the elderly, each with specific needs and vulnerabilities;
- ◆ Cultural factors influence forced migrants' communication styles, coping mechanisms and help-seeking behaviour. Unlike in Cyprus, Lithuania has a distinct group of war refugees from a single nationality – Ukrainians. The Ukrainian culture is historically closer to Lithuania than the Arab culture, so their communication styles and coping mechanisms are culturally similar;
- ◆ The majority of forced migrants have lost their social network and relationships with their relatives because they were forced to flee their country of origin;
- ◆ Personal stories: both Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers recognise the importance of an individual approach to working with refugees.

Having identified the portraits of the forced migrants and analysed the views of Cypriot and Lithuanian social workers on aspects of the psychosocial characteristics of forced migrants, the study focused on

the methods of work that are most often used in practice in providing support to forced migrants.

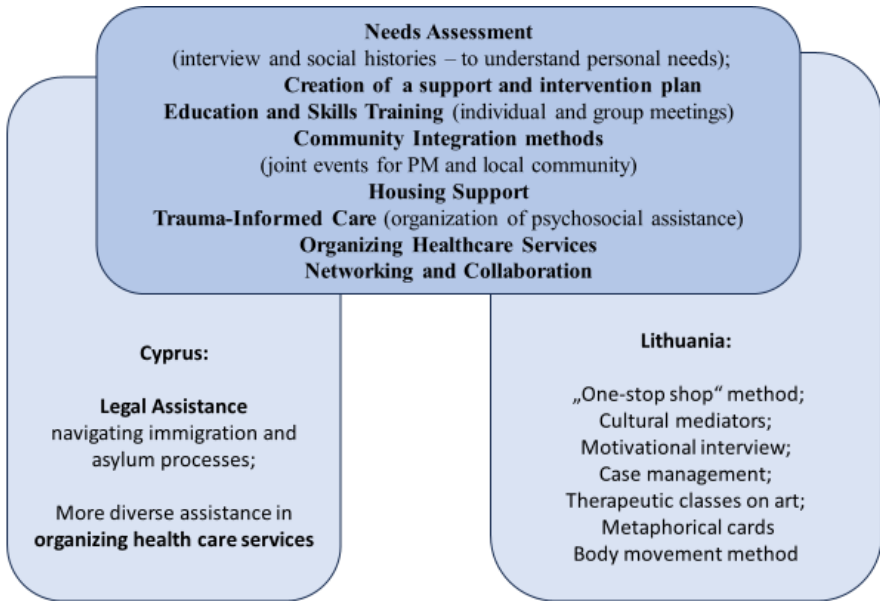


Fig. 7 Methods used by social workers when working with forced migrants

Based on the **“world cafe”** method, the study analysed which working methods Lithuanian and Cypriot social workers lack when providing support to forced migrants. It was found that the greatest need was for methods aimed at the development of intercultural communication competence and the strengthening of psychological resilience of social workers. In this context, the training used a variety of methods to develop intercultural communication competence and psychological resilience, some of which are presented in the publication, using experiential education methods.

In order to achieve successful integration of foreigners, it is necessary to develop intercultural communication skills and multicultural competences of both the incoming foreigners and the representatives of

the host society. Various experiential teaching/learning methods are recommended for this purpose, some of which are presented below: "My suitcase", "Cultural T-shirt". This approach provides participants with a new experience of intercultural communication, a deeper understanding of their own attitudes and the development of multicultural competences.

PRESENTATION OF THE METHOD "MY SUITCASE"

The method is recommended for the development of intercultural communication skills, raising awareness of migration and reducing stereotypes towards immigrants. The method is recommended for group work.

Description of the process: participants are asked to divide into teams and are given a suitcase (e.g. a large suitcase drawn on a piece of A3 paper) and coloured sticky notes. Participants are asked to discuss in teams and decide what traits, skills, and feelings they should take away to a distant country (e.g. if they become an emigrant, refugee). The traits are written down on sticky notes and stuck on a "suitcase". The teams are then asked to present their suitcase and comment on why they chose these traits.



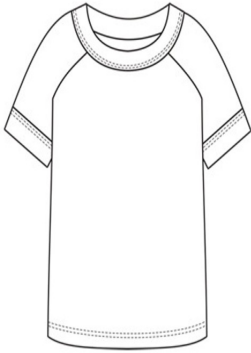
Team size: 3 to 6 people. The number of teams can vary.

Duration. 20–60 min.

Special tools needed: large painted suitcase, sticky notes, writing/drawing tools.

Fig. 8 My Suitcase

PRESENTATION OF THE METHOD “CULTURAL T-SHIRT”



The method is designed to deepen the knowledge of one’s own “native” culture and those of other “foreign” cultures, and to reduce ethnic and cultural stereotypes. In the project, the “Cultural T-shirt” method was used in an inter-cultural group, where group members were divided into sub-groups according to the cultures they represented and were asked to complete a task in the sub-group and present it to the group for a wider discussion.

Fig. 9 Cultural shirt (Bartkevičienė, Bubnys, 2012, p. 80–81).

Description of the process: take two sheets of paper and draw the outline of the given T-shirts on them. Within these outlines, draw pictures, symbols, inscriptions or a combination of these that reflect you as a member of a particular culture. On the front of the T-shirt, include the key elements of your culture that other people know about. The shirt can be divided into four equal parts to represent:

- ◆ Key cultural values or norms
- ◆ Rules or characteristics of etiquette
- ◆ Customs (rituals, symbols)
- ◆ Behavioural and communication characteristics

On the back of the T-shirt, depict something that is not immediately apparent in your culture, or that other people don’t know about, or that you avoid showing to others.

Present yourself as a member of a particular culture by describing your decorations.

Discussion: How’s your drawing going? Which element was more difficult to draw? Why? Which of your cultural traits does a particular drawing reflect? Discussion in a group.

PRESENTATION OF THE METHOD “MINDSPRING”

“MindSpring” is a group psychosocial support programme for refugees, forced migrants and people from ethnic minority background. “MindSpring” aims at raising awareness among forced migrants about the challenges of migration and integration, empowering them to help themselves and their community, thus preventing the development of psychological and social problems. A “MindSpring” group consists of 8–10 participants from a refugee, forced migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds. The content of “MindSpring” is set out in a programme (*MindSpring for and with parents from refugee backgrounds*, 2021), with themes related to life in immigration, such as: identity and identity change, intercultural communication and the new norms of the host society, social control, gender and rights, loneliness and community, and the stresses and traumas of forced migrants. The participants of the “MindSpring” group meet 9–10 times over a period of 2 months. Each meeting has a specific theme which is described in the programme. The meetings are led by a “MindSpring” trainer who has a similar education and speaks the same language as the group participants. The meetings are held in the participants’ mother tongue and are based on a peer-to-peer approach, where forced migrants from similar backgrounds and cultures share experiences, discuss and find solutions to their difficulties. The trainer, specially trained in the “MindSpring” methodology, is assisted by a consultant who is a professional (psychologist, social worker, teacher). “MindSpring” is aimed at both newly arrived refugees and forced migrants, as well as those migrants of ethnic minority background who have been living in the host society for several years. The programme includes a theoretical introduction to each topic and practical group exercises. The publication contains one of the “MindSpring” group exercises aimed at understanding cultural diversity and promoting intercultural communication.

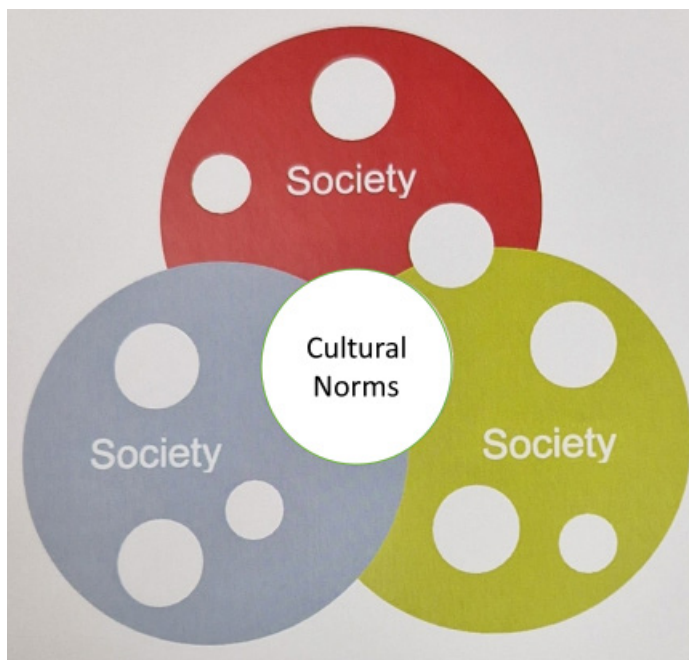


Fig. 10 Social and cultural norms

(MindSpring for and with parents from refugee backgrounds, 2021)

Description of the process: participants are asked to imagine that the circles in Figure 10 represent the cultures of three different societies. The smallest middle circle represents the norms that are common to all three societies, i.e. that are shared by the cultures of all three societies. Participants in the group are asked to analyse each culture and its norms (whether they are common to the society as a whole or to certain communities). During the discussion, participants identify the norms of the societies. Afterwards, the group is asked to present the identified norms and to comment on why they chose these norms for the three societies.

Duration: 20–40 min. Special tools needed: large sheet of paper and coloured pens, sticky notes, writing/drawing tools.

It is noteworthy that “MindSpring” is a group psychosocial support programme successfully used in Denmark, Finland and other Scandina-

vian countries. The usefulness of the programme has been confirmed by research (Hansen, Carlsson, Glahder Lindberg, Jensen, Sonne, 2018; Husby, Carlsson, J., Scotte Jensen, A.M, Glahder Lindberg, & Sonne, 2020) and MindSpring has been recognised by the UNHCR (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*) as a best practice in empowering refugees, forced migrants, and in promoting psychosocial support and integration.

PRESENTATION OF THE METHOD “METAPHORICAL ASSOCIATIVE CARDS”

“Metaphorical Associative Cards” is an effective method that uses imagery to reveal emotions and repressed feelings to free oneself from the shadows of the past, awaken intuition, and deepen one’s knowledge of oneself and others. Metaphorical associative cards are often used in working with socially vulnerable groups, especially in cases where clients find it difficult to formulate a problem or express their feelings independently. This method is also used effectively with forced migrants to help them overcome language barriers, negative attitudes, fears, etc. Metaphorical associative cards create an atmosphere of trust that overcomes internal resistance and minimises the protective mental and cultural barriers to consultation.

Metaphorical associative card kits usually consist of: cards with pictures, stories, faces, archetypes or abstractions and words, signs and symbols that provide additional insights or resources to explore.

The main concepts of the method: *METAPHORICAL*—a picturesque figurative statement, a hidden comparison based on the juxtaposition and identification of objects and phenomena that are not actually related but have similar characteristics. *ASSOCIATIVE*—a relationship between phenomena, whereby the actualisation of one of them (by perception, imagination, internalization) leads to the emergence of another. *PROJECTIVE*—unconscious transfer of human feelings, attitudes, desires to the outside world. *CARDS*—a postcard-sized image with or without verbal meaning.

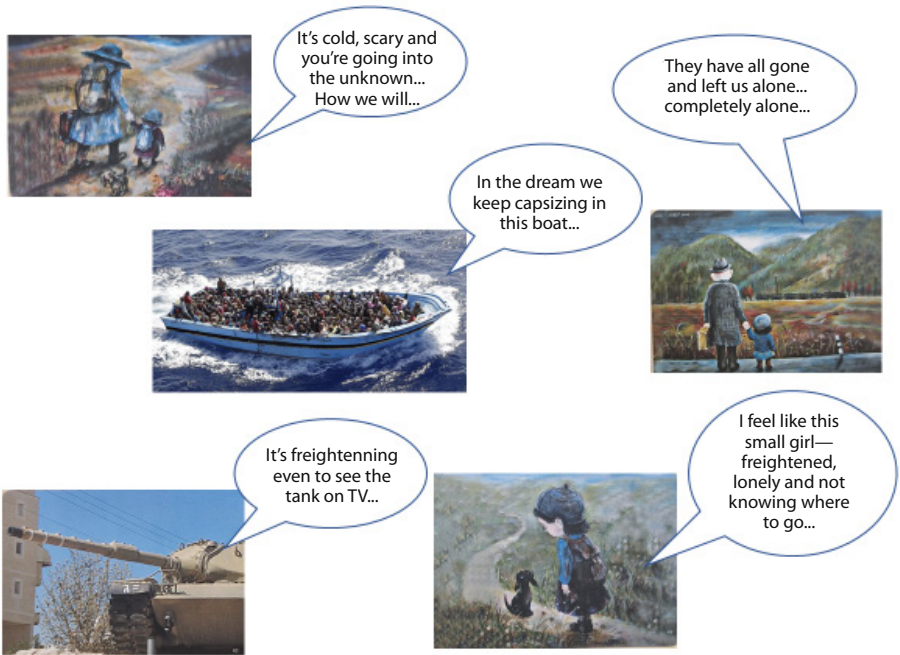


Fig. 11 Metaphorical associative cards in working with forced migrants

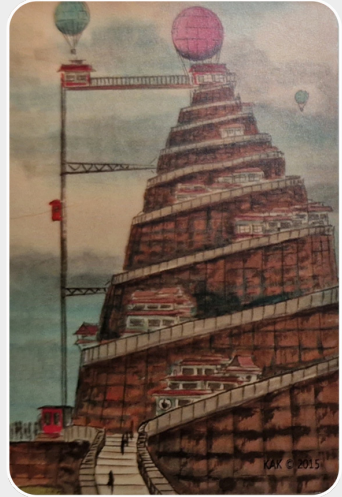
The Metaphorical Associative Cards can be used not only by psychologists or psychotherapists, but also by social workers, teachers, HR professionals, lecturers, etc.

One of the methods of Metaphorical Associative Cards (Whitmore, Kauffman, David, 2013), *the GROW model metaphorical cards*, is presented in more detail in this publication. The cards cover several key areas: 1) Grow Goals 2) Grow Reality 3) Grow Obstacles 4) Grow Opportunities and 5) Grow Way Forward

Description of the process: participants are asked to think about a complex intercultural communication problem that they are currently facing and to answer the questions by selecting one card representing each of the areas listed above:

GOAL:

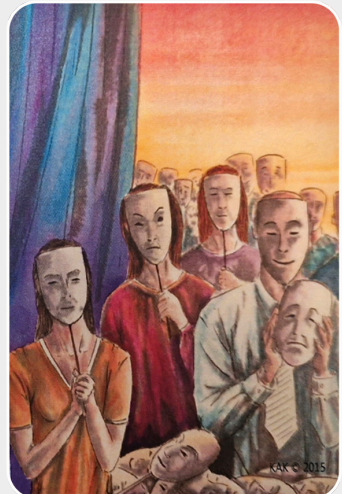
- ♥ What's depicted in the picture?
- ♥ What's the underlying meaning of a metaphor? What does it mean for you?
- ♥ How can this be linked to the pathway to your goal (i.e. the resolution of a conflict situation in intercultural communication)?
- ♥ What is the relationship between the picture and the word and between the picture and the situation under analysis?



The participants chose and analyse another card:

REALITY:

- ♥ What's depicted in the picture?
- ♥ What's the underlying meaning of a metaphor? What does it mean for you?
- ♥ How can this be understood in relation to the reality of the situation under analysis and its solution (i.e. the goal discussed above)?
- ♥ What is the relationship between the picture and the word and between the picture and the situation under analysis?



The participants chose and analyse another card:

OBSTACLES:

- ♥ What's depicted in the picture?
- ♥ What's the underlying meaning of a metaphor? What does it mean for you?
- ♥ How can this be linked to the possible obstacles in the way to your goal (i.e. the resolution of a conflict situation in intercultural communication)?
- ♥ What is the relationship between the picture and the word and between the picture and the situation under analysis?



The participants chose and analyse another card:

OPPORTUNITIES:

- ♥ What's depicted in the picture?
- ♥ What's the underlying meaning of a metaphor? What does it mean for you?
- ♥ How can this be related to the situation under analysis and the goal of resolving it? What is the relationship between picture and words?
- ♥ At this stage, transformations are possible (refining, changing or even abandoning the goal).



The participants chose and analyse the last card:

WAY FORWARD:

- ♥ What's depicted in the picture?
- ♥ What's the underlying meaning of a metaphor? What does it mean for you?
- ♥ What steps can be taken to achieve this goal? (i.e. to resolve a conflict situation in intercultural communication)?
- ♥ What is the relationship between the picture and the word and between the picture and the situation under analysis?



When participants answer these questions honestly, in a sense, they are discovering new information about the situation they are analysing, and creating some potential for change. It then becomes possible to develop certain strategies to overcome the obstacles. Once the participants have discovered the strategies (in this case, how to resolve a particular conflict in intercultural communication) that are most likely to work, they can then anticipate the steps to implement the strategy (in a step-by-step approach). Participants can discuss in the group which strategies are long-term and which are short-term. What could be achieved without additional resources (e.g. translators/interpreters, other human or financial resources) and what is impossible to achieve without support.

METHODS OF ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

Methods of alternative communication evolved from the primary need to communicate with people suffering from speech and other communication disorders. Thus, in 1980, the *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association* adopted the term *augmentative and alternative communication* (AAC) and began developing alternative communication techniques.

We use many communication tools and instruments in our daily lives:



Fig. 12 Communication tools

Methods of alternative communication are being developed by analysing different communication tools and their potential applications. The most well-known of them— PECS (*Picture Exchange Communication System*), “*Let’s communicate with pictures*”, “*Bliss symbol system*”—are designed for people with disabilities and speech impediments. However, it is not only people with disabilities who face communication difficulties and “language barriers”, but also forced migrants who do not speak the official language of the host country and speak only their mother tongue. In such situations, social workers are recommended to use the services of an interpreter. However, the services of an interpreter are not always available (especially when the forced migrant comes from an exotic, unfamiliar country and speaks only his/her mother

tongue). In this situation, the *method of alternative communication cards for forced migrants* is recommended (Figure 13).



Fig. 13 Method of alternative communication cards for forced migrants

This is an alternative communication method that helps forced migrants to express their basic needs, feelings and thoughts through simple pictures.

In the framework of the project, the method of alternative communication cards for forced migrants has been approved and tested in social work practice with forced migrants (both in Cypriot and Lithuanian migrant centres). The experts point out that this method is easily integrated into social work practice with forced migrants, is simple and can help forced migrants to express their basic needs.



Intercultural communication is a complex and, above all – reciprocal process. Forced migrants have already become members of our host society, of the community in the neighbourhood where they live, of our work, educational, health or social communities. Increasingly, forced migrants are seen as one of the target groups for social services. Therefore, we, as members of the host society, as providers of social work and other targeted assistance to forced migrants, need to be ready to welcome new members. It is the sincere hope of the authors and the project partners that the analysis of the theoretical material presented and the recommended practical activities will help both Lithuanian and Cypriot practitioners to develop a culturally sensitive and qualified support to forced migrants.

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