

Sharing strengths, developing communities - promoting strength-based learning across societies for the future - Grundtvig Learning Partnership Program

Journal of the Project

The Journal will contain three types of information, identified by 3 icons:



Best practices – exercises, activities, shared and experimented practices



Case studies – visits, meetings, people and experiences that we had the opportunity to know



Stories – what happened during the mobilities – storytelling & images

Prague Meeting Monday, 30th September – Thursday, 3rd October 2013



Prague has been the first visit and the very ‘kick off’ of Grundtvig project.

After the work we did virtually and from distance in the Project definition and presentation phase, we finally had the occasion to meet in person!

Each partner has had the opportunity to introduce themselves and present their activities and experiences based on strengths based approaches.

In Prague we put the basis for our strength-based partnership, starting to work both in sharing strengths, experiences and tools, and in collecting best practice examples and case studies.

We had the opportunity to know other organizations and strength-based projects carried out in the Czech Republic, and also to cooperate and dialoguing with the Appreciative Inquiry European Network Meeting which held its meeting in Prague just in those days.

UK partners contributed to design and delivery a workshop on Appreciative Inquiry for Prednost Prednostem project, an European project carried on by the Czech partner. The workshop design has been finalized in the first day of the meeting by all the partners and each partner took part at the delivery of the workshop.

We had several opportunities to appreciate and visit Prague's different sites, also through a 'metawalk', a special metaphorical tool that combine walking, noticing different corners of the town and reflecting on himself in a 'generative dialogue'.

We shared a 'valuation' process at the end of the meeting, being all mutually in charge of searching for, identifying and describing what we value about each other and our cooperation.

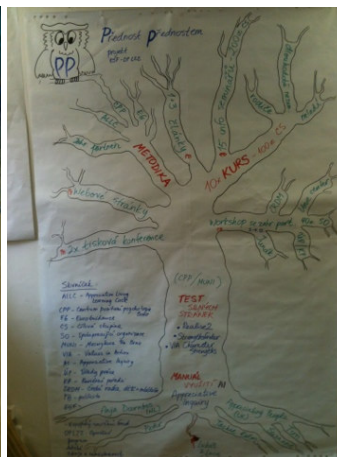
While discovering and sharing our strengths, we used and shared many different tools and exercises, as well as theories and references.



September, 30th - Meeting at SCIO Offices

Meeting of the Project Partners. Kick off of the Project

Welcome from Czech's Project Team, introduction to the Project and Projects' partners, agreements on Agenda.





October 1st, PP workshop

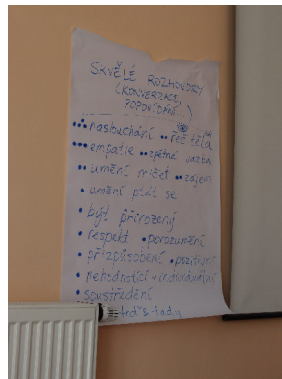
All project's participants joined Appreciating People training a 1 day workshop in the framework of the PP Project. Workshop was about Appreciative Conversations, Appreciative Inquiry, Resilience and Journaling. We have been hosted in an educational farm Toulcův dvůr, a cozy environment with a great history.



Some moments of work and activity during the workshop... Paired and small groups work, lectures



Some outputs of the workshop:



Workshop on Appreciative approach

Aims of the workshop:

- Learning about strength based approaches that can help people and us we work with.
- Share our knowledge and experience
- Gain some practical and useful tools and techniques to help us in our work especially in creating better conversations
- Very basic introduction to the underlying methodology of Appreciative Inquiry
- To help us do that we are going to work on our own strengths so that we can experience how we can affect others

Workshop's contents:

- Identifying our strengths and what is Appreciative Inquiry
- Building our resilience
- Importance of journaling
- Appreciative Conversations- tools and techniques
- Importance of errors and mistakes and learning from them



October, 2nd - Meeting at SCIO Offices

Each partner presented his/her organization and each one presented himself



Prednost Prednostem project, a wide vocational guidance project in which some of the Grundtvig project partners were involved. We shared part of the training of the project in the workshop of Tuesday, 1



October, 2nd - Encounter with Appreciative Inquiry European meeting participants

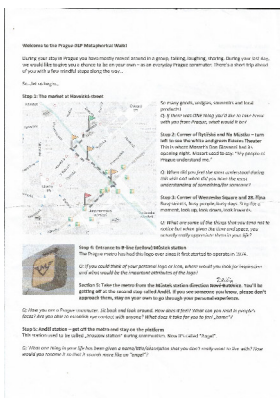
Participants of Grundtvig Project met “Appreciative Inquiry European Network meeting” participants and shared both the aim of Grundtvig’s project and some Strengths Based and Appreciative Inquiry approaches topics.



The AI European Network is a group of professionals from different European countries who meet themselves twice a year with the aim to share and spread AI practice. Grundtvig Project’s Czech’s hosts take advantage of the coincidence of having the Network meeting in Prague hold simultaneously and arranged a meeting. The meeting has been a good opportunity to know the Network and to introduce the Project to the network.



October 3rd – Prague’s metaphorical walk



In the morning, participants arranged in pairs shared a ‘metaphorical walk’ across Prague. The walk ended up in a shared lunch at ‘Smichov’, a Prague’s neighborhood not usually visited by tourists. For some of the couples the walk was so interesting and engaging that has taken more than two hours instead of the scheduled one....



‘Metaphorical walk’ is a walk with a specific purpose: it means to use a walk outdoors to discover things, look more carefully at the environment, and then look at the metaphor within the environment. In the Project has been an opportunity to see some Prague’s corners from a different perspective, and at the same time to share feelings, insights and thoughts about themselves with another person using an appreciative and metaphorical point of view.



October 3rd - Visit evaluation and closing

In the afternoon participants met at 'The Hub' <http://prague.the-hub.net/> to review and finalize what had been done, wrap up, plan for the next meetings we agreed on, In Liverpool and Turin, and to (e)valuate the mobility using Appreciative approaches. Each participants received his Certificate of Participation.



Appreciative (E)Valuation: it's a way to evaluate how a meeting , a project, a workshop is gone from an appreciative perspective and using a participative approach based on shared questions and shared answers. Unlike more traditional evaluation processes, which often concentrate on practical details, this approach is based upon Appreciative Inquiry principles of:

- Building on "what works"
- Working from strengths
- Concentrating on creating a learning organisation
- Encouraging generative action.
- Supporting individual action and further commitment

All participants are asked to answer a number of questions. Participants are asked to write their responses on post it notes and they are recorded verbatim.

In this case, we evaluated our first mobility by asking everyone how did he/she feel, what the best moments had been for him/her, what he/she would want more or different.

The term 'Valuation' is used to support emphasis on the 'value' of the event to the participant.

In this case we used as a 'helping tool' for expressing our feeling the 'Angels Cards' <https://www.findhorn.org/workshops/game/angel-cards/>



Informal and convivial moments: sharing strengths it also means to share habits and cultural traditions. We started in Prague one of the project's 'good habits': to know and taste different foods and dishes from the national and local tradition, in a friendly atmosphere.



In Prague we also celebrated the first printed edition of 'Taste of AI', one of Appreciating People materials on AI.



Liverpool Meeting Monday, 7th July – Thursday, 10th July 2014

Liverpool meeting was the occasion to deepen and reinforce our cooperation in the project and to know and to share many experiences and tools related to AI and strength-based approaches. Appreciating People, the UK partner, has a well-established experience on appreciative projects and AP team shared with other project partners its knowledge and network.

The concurrency of Liverpool Business Festival gave the opportunity to link our Grundtvig Project with local network and events.



July 7th - Meeting and group work at Quaker Meeting House

AP people welcomed participants. We shared visit's programme and timetable, get introduced to each other and begun to share thoughts and experiences through some helpful exercises



Lean questions and responses exercise in pairs: excerpt from AP's Great Conversation Cards Pack. The purpose is to practice the ability to create lean questions and answers, practising no interruptions and learning to listen more effectively. It fosters creativity and dialogue.



Sharing strengths exercise: each one identifies a strength and tells a story about it. A way to know each other through own best parts and a good practice in finding and recognizing our own strengths



Choose a puppet and present yourself and your current state of mind through it. A fun and playful exercise to know each other and facilitate a bit of self-disclosure in a safe way

We overcome language's issues not only by relying on each other translations, but also using non-verbal communication and creativity...



July 8th - Visit to St. Andrews community

A participated visit to St Andrews Community Network in Clubmoor neighbourhood to know Community Network work and 'My Clubmoor', a community development project owned by residents and granted by the Big Lottery Fund.



St Andrew's Community Network is an independent charity, set up in 2002, and came out of the church's desire to play a part in making the community a better place. Clubmoor is one of the most deprived areas in the UK and the charity is committed to responding to the needs of the community and providing good quality services, activities and events to help improve the lives of people in the area.

This might be through helping them in a crisis, empowering local people, or putting on activities and events that are fun and life affirming.

We met Community and Project's facilitators and know more about the 'Asset Based Community Development' approach they used. A good example of using an AI approach to community development: using a Discovery phase based on conversations around the neighbourhood, different topics have been identifying to work on, like local economy, employment, youth, and a co-constructed strategy has been choose. Community Network and My Clubmoor offer a wide range of advices, services and activities to

Clubmoor residents, involving a number of volunteer and others organizations. They try to use a positive way to look at an issue, by offering opportunities and activities that help people to learn take care of themselves, be more empowered and aware of their strengths and possibilities.



Food Bank: with a playful exercise we knew about Food Bank, one of the St Andrews Community Network activities, that provides 3 days worth of food to families who are struggling to feed themselves, involving a number of voucher's holders who contact families and give advice.



Journaling workshop. A workshop about appreciative journaling and about how to build upon appreciative skills in order to develop wellbeing, development and resilience, holded by Appreciating People. Appreciative journaling helps to be more appreciative with themselves and the world we live in, to develop an optimistic and generative thought, to notice positive things around us, and develop and build upon our resilience



Foodbank exercise: we put ourselves in the shoes of people who have difficulty in make ends meet and we filled our baskets following the rules of Foodbank .



July 8th - Visit to Anfield Breckside Community Council

We have been hosting at the Community Council Venue, and they arranged for us a wonderful BBQ. We met both volunteers and people who attend the Centre and work in the difficult and controversial neighbourhood where Liverpool Stadium football team is.



Anfield Breckside Community Council it's a charity run by local people for the benefit of all residents of the Anfield & Breckside area of Liverpool. It wishes to promote both the people and the area by building relationships between the residents and the local and statutory authorities, other voluntary organisations and commercial enterprises. ABCC is committed to the residents of the Anfield & Breckside area and offer a range of activities and projects that are intended to increase participation, provide opportunities for the development of skills and employment and advance health and wellbeing. It encourages the sharing of knowledge and good practice throughout the community and ensures local residents are engaged and take an active role in any initiatives taking place within the area to safeguard their interests and bring about positive benefits.

ABCC arranged just for us a performance of Samba Beat, an amazing group of young girls playing drums. The group is a way to involve and motivate young people and overall young girls in an engaging activity, helping them to achieve greater self-esteem, have fun and play together for themselves and the community.



July 9th - Visit to Museum of Liverpool

A guided visit to *Museum of Liverpool*, "the world's first national museum devoted to the history of a regional city and the largest newly-built national museum in Britain for more than a century", helped us learn more about the history of the city and its lifestyle. Engaging 360° immersive films brought us in the Beatle's story and in the rivalry between Liverpool and Everton FC...




July 9th - Event at Liverpool Festival of Business

Appreciating People organized a presentation of its work and products at Liverpool Business Festival, introducing as well to event's participants our Grundtvig Project and the partners. A good opportunity to enjoy the Festival atmosphere and to meet people interested in strengths based approaches and community development.





 **Liverpool Business Festival.** An International Festival for Business is a 50-day business festival hosted in Liverpool during June-July 2014. A global showcase for great British industry across multiple sectors, trying to bring UK businesses to new markets, new products and new partners.



July 9th - Sharing & Learning session at Liverpool Business Festival Hub

Hosted in a wonderful venue at Liverpool Business Festival Hub, we shared our best experiences with Appreciative Inquiry and deepened some AI themes and topics.

We also reflected on our visit's experiences through an Appreciative Conversation.

We closed the visit sharing our feelings and emotions.



Paired interviews. A classic Appreciative tool, used to foster communication, improve each other knowledge and share feelings, ideas, hopes and projects. We use it to share our AI experiences and knowledge and to identify World Caf  topics



World Caf . A well known tool that facilitates discussion and sharing in large groups, and helps to deepen topics and issues as well as decision making. We worked in small groups based on the different topics identified in the previous paired interviews.

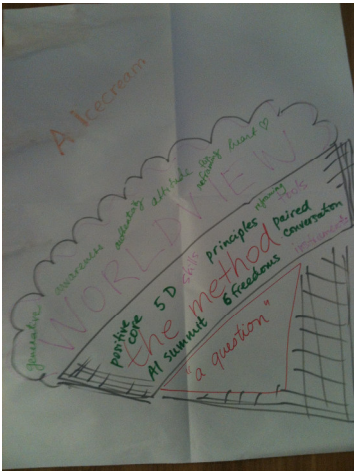


Appreciative Conversation: interviews in that the questions concentrate on what works, looking at problems and issues from a different perspective, focusing on the generative and creative.

In this conversation, we shared high point of our visit, thought back to our wishes at the beginning of the visit, shared WOW moments and reflected on our learnings and taking away from the visit.

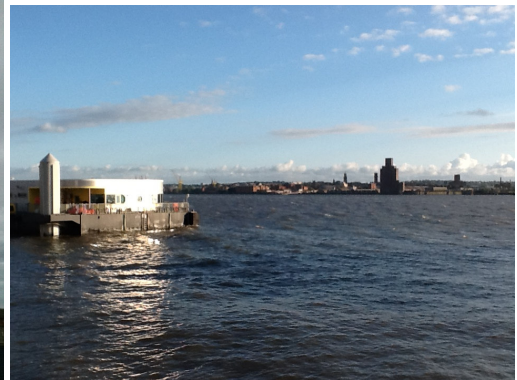


Using images to express feelings and state of mind: it's easiest to express own feeling with the help of pictures and images. Each one chosen an image that expressed his/her feelings at the moment, and shared it with the rest of the large group.



Enjoy Liverpool spirit, environment and heritage, enjoy people, food and beer ...

Informal moments have been a great opportunity to appreciate each other's strengths and to share experiences, impressions and intentions. Liverpool welcoming attitude and openness helped us to deepen our mutual knowledge and to think about new projects and collaborations.



Turin Meeting Tuesday, 25th November – Thursday, 27th November 2014

Turin meeting has been a journey through Torino, its strengths and the strengths of their citizens and visitors. It has been an occasion to see how this city and the people and organizations we met have been able to change themselves, to transform buildings, actions and relationships from time to time, appreciating what has been done in the past and imagining too how future can be.

Appreciative and strength based approaches aren't well known in Italy, and the meetings arranged gave the opportunity to disseminate and experiencing approaches in organizations we met.



November 25th -Welcome meeting

Welcome meeting at Cooperativa Progetto Muret venue. Work on 'getting to know each other', sharing of expectations and sharing of strengths of each own Country. Cooperativa Progetto Muret introduction and story.



Cooperativa Progetto Muret. It's a social cooperative that offers services to people with mental illness problems, from housing to social and psychological support and work opportunities. Their aim is to help people to be more independent and empowered, building on strengths and resources instead of being stuck in diagnosis and stigma



Paired interview: who I'm I and why I'm here. Then share with the group something about the person you've meet



Sharing strength from your own Country exercise: What do you bring with you about what are you proud of from your Country/ your cultural context? Work in triads – share with others. Fill the posters around with post it, pictures/draws, key words ...



November 25th –Guided tour to Turin

A discovery tour in search of hidden and esoteric treasures. Unexpected places and amazing views...



November 26th Visit Cecchi Point venue

We met Cecchi point facilitators and volunteers, and visited the different spaces that this community center offers to neighbourhood 'Circoscrizione 7' citizens.



Cecchi Point. It's a multicultural HUB built by recovering spaces of a former bus depot. In the different and versatile spaces a not for profit organizations arranged several different activities, involving other organizations and associations of the neighborhood and offering opportunities to meet to citizens. There is a foodbank, a theatre, 'Officine Popolari', popular workshops and factories in which bicycles are repaired, furniture are designed and build, clothes are sewn and repaired. A rehearsal space for buskers and street artist is provided, as well as a Theatre for theater groups. After school and training for youth people is offered as well.



Appreciative Question & Answer time: it's an appreciative interview focused on what worked and went well, that not only helps the interviewer to better understand, but it gives the opportunity to the interviewee to reflect and achieve new insights. An example of question used was: *How and when in your*

activities it happens/it has been happened to promote well-being and quality of life enhancing and increasing the resources and appreciating strengths? Can you tell us a story about it, a story that is for you a source of great satisfaction and pride?







November 26th Visit and Lunch at Circolo Passoni

Project participants have been hosted by Associazione Arcobaleno at Circolo Passoni. We had a wonderful lunch and met association's members and workers in a convivial and informal situation. We also met the workers and heard the story of 'Contratto di quartiere di via Ghedini'.




 *Associazione Arcobaleno*: a not for profit association made by mental illness patients, their families and social workers. The aim is to offer and involve people and family with mental problems in social work and wellbeing projects. They organize activities, run projects and spaces like Circolo Passoni, a caffè and restaurant run by patients and former patients in the popular Turin's neighbourhood "Barriera di Milano".

 *Contratto di quartiere di via Ghedini*: an experiment of codesign and participative design in participatory planning within a regeneration and urban renewal project. The project encountered many difficulties and unexpected issues and we focused our conversations on challenges and problem solving strategies used in the project.

November 27th Meeting at Bilco – Center for Career Guidance and closing meeting

We met Bilco workers and shared experiences about vocational guidance. We did some activities in paired and small groups sharing experiences on our learning experiences and our ideal learning environment. We also did our final valuation about the visit using some classical valuation questions and post it techniques. We said goodbye in a final circle using a talking piece ...

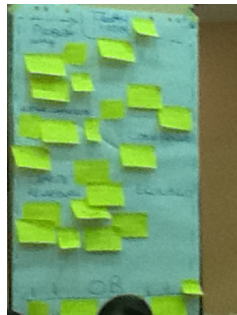
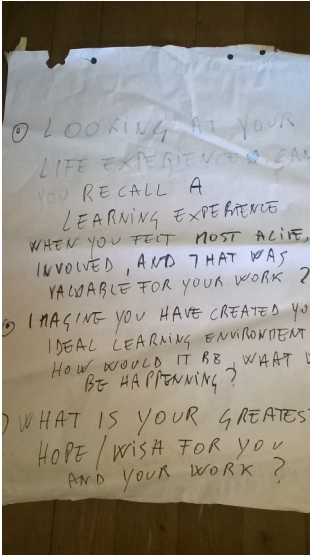
 *Bilco – Guidance and employment services centre*. It addresses to people who need to improve the capacity to manage their professional developing, to answer to the request of the labour market. Customers are teenagers, young adults, adults and senior and enterprises. It gives information, counselling, training, employment support and job matching.



Appreciative Conversation: interviews in that the questions concentrate on what works, looking at problems and issues from a different perspective, focusing on the generative and creative. In this conversation, we shared successful learning experiences, we dreamed about a ideal learning environment and we shared hopes and wishes for our work.



Talking piece: tool for conducting a meeting, based on the use of an object, a 'talking piece' (it could be a soft ball, a small stone...) that passes from person to person giving the permission to speak to the person who is holding it. The aim is to give each one the opportunity to talk and being heard, to slow down dialogue and interaction and to foster a deeper understanding. Talking piece's holder has the right to speak while everyone else listens without interruption or comments.



Enjoy Turin, Food and friends ... Once again, the visit has been also a great opportunity to meet a country lifestyle, its food and its culture. Of course , from an appreciative point of view !





Prague Meeting Monday, 11th May 2015 – Wednesday, 13th May 2015

The last meeting of the project had the aim to finalize project's materials and outcome and to meet a couple of organizations interested in Appreciative Inquiry.



May 11th – Presentations and planning at Cafè Louvre, walk in the Old town and lunch at Cafè Slavia.

An alternative way to have a meeting, surrounded by an elegant Czech atmosphere. Part of the 'Core Grundtvig Project Team reunited and a couple of newcomers from UK has been introduced. Plans and agreements.

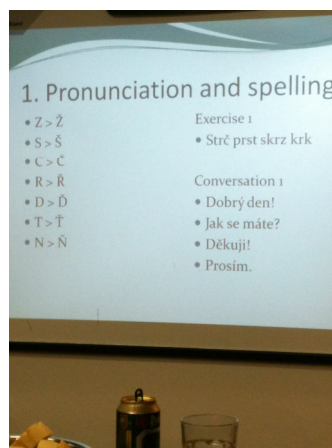
A nice walk around Narodni and Staromeska and a light lunch at Cafe Slavia where Vaclav Havel used to go.





May 11th – Organizational meeting, Czech lessons and appetizer at SCIO

A good opportunity to meet again some participants from the previous visits. A funny and playful ‘Czech lesson’ having some of Czech colleagues as teachers ... now we feel more relaxed and confident in our communications in Prague!



May 12th - Meeting at Vysehrad

A ‘walking meeting’ sharing thoughts, insights and hopes from the future that this project has been inspiring us. Deep and generatives conversations putting together practices and experiences from 3 different Countries....



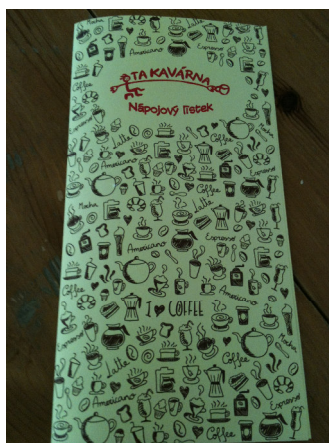


May 12th - TA Kavarna visit

We met Andrea, participant from the previous project mobility, at her workplace, Ta Kavarna.



Ta Kavarna: a special café where people with disabilities can practice and learn a job in a safe and welcoming environment. A friendly and cozy place, where strengths and resources are a way of thinking and living, and where all people, despite their abilities, skills and dispositions can join and have good time and a place to talk and share.



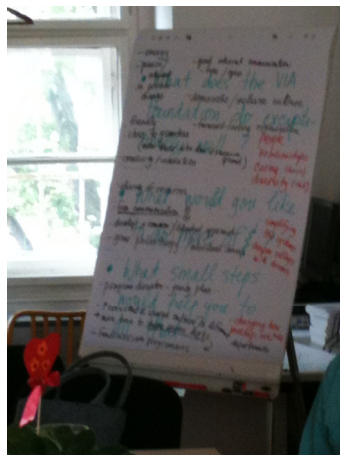


May 12th – VIA Foundation meeting

A collaborative meeting, in which Appreciative methods were used to help Foundation team reflect on success and future projects and needs. The Foundation team is very interested and oriented to the use of AI in strategic approach and daily practices.



The Via Foundation supports active people who nurture community life in Czech cities, towns and villages, strengthens non-profit organizations, investing in their development and in their leaders' growth, and helps to re-establish disrupted traditions of philanthropy and giving. VIA Foundation assists people who have taken the initiative to create positive change in their communities. It provides both funds for local organizations to accomplish specific projects in their community as well as training and other assistance for non-profit organizations to learn to stand on their own.



Moments and perspectives in the cozy Prague...





Education and Culture DG

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