

2020-1-DE02-KA227-ADU-008006



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

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Creative tools for job seeking

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Introduction

The main awareness built in the framework of the Creative FEM-Power project, aimed at intensifying the dialogue with female migrants through creative methods, is that mastering the host country language and accessing its labour market are two key steps of the integration process for all migrants. The curriculum “**Creative tools for job seeking**” deals with the second challenge and is meant to introduce **new learning methods** to help migrant women gaining awareness of their own abilities and strengths, and to use them consciously when searching for a job.

Notably, one of the main challenges for migrant women is **finding a job** in the country of arrival, since they face difficulties and barriers as both migrants and women. Moreover, it is well known that migrant women are the ones who usually take on all family and childcare obligations, which may profoundly hamper the process of entering the labour market.

Due to the specificity of their condition and of the “life journey” migrant women experience, it seems necessary to think of **activities developed *ad hoc***, trying to engage with them taking into account past, differences, needs and specificities. To do so, the intensification of dialogue with female migrants is of fundamental importance, as it allows everyone to learn more about their views and objectives and find reliable methods for the integrational task. Indeed, the curriculum does not have the presumption of being a definitive manual for the understanding of female migrants and their paths, but it aims at creating an occasion of mutual exchange and reciprocal learning between participants and trainers, as it is often the case in learning environments.

Based on these premises, the workshop “Creative tools for job seeking” aims at building an increased **self-awareness of personal experiences, knowledge, skills, and talents** in order to learn how to do an **effective self-introduction** in the context of the labour market of the country of arrival. To reach this objective, the workshop is structured on a progressive development of self-exploration and knowledge, starting from some creative activities to make participants’ competences, abilities, and talents emerge, and then analysing the skills needed to communicate them effectively to an interlocutor, especially in a stressful context as it may be that of a job interview.

This curriculum is divided in four main parts:

1. The description of the workshop and its aims;
2. A brief presentation of participants’ prerequisites;
3. The learning outcomes to be achieved;
4. A detailed description of each of the 11 activities composing the workshop.

The “Curriculum” is meant to describe the contents and the objectives of the workshop activities, whereas a detailed explanation of their practical development and implementation can be found in the “**Compendium of methods**” (see below).

Description and aims of the workshop

The workshop “Creative tools for job seeking” is a **15-hour course**, structured in **20 didactic units**, lasting **45 minutes each**. The target audience of this workshop are migrant women, more specifically migrant women in working-age, with a sufficient knowledge of the language of the country in which the workshop is held (for more details, see the section about the prerequisites).

The optimal location to develop the workshop is a room or a classroom, providing furniture to sit down together, one table or more, as well as some additional empty space to do standing-up activities or divide in groups. Eventually, it may also require equipment to show a presentation, such as a projector, speakers, and sockets. The materials necessary for the workshop are sheets of paper, pencils/pens, a camera to record videos, and a computer.

The optimal number of participants is 10-12 women. To be able to conduct the workshop, trainers should divide the participants in small groups, as homogeneous as possible for what concerns the knowledge of the language of the host country.

The principal aim of the workshop is to accompany the participants into a **journey of self-consciousness**, to become aware (or more aware) of their own strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and abilities, through the “**Creative Biography Work**” methodology. The final purpose for the participants’ is to use this gained awareness to design their own personal strategy for job seeking.

The activities are carried out partly as a group and partly individually. After an initial explanation of the project and the objectives of the course, the first phase of the workshop is made of group activities, dedicated to bringing out the competences, abilities, and talents of each participant. To obtain these results, methodologies will be adopted that include timelines, role plays, theatrical work, audio materials and recordings (i.e., for the setting and the use of voice).

The first phase will be followed by an individual work phase aimed at drafting a video script about personal history and self-promotion, which will then be recorded, with the constant support of the trainers.

After the videos have been recorded, the group activity will resume with the viewing of the videos and the collection of feedback from the participants. Feedback will be of fundamental importance as showing others their story before and after the migration, even if in a protected environment, will allow participants to visualize their path, recognising what they knew how to do before, what they learnt during the migration journey and what they experienced in the host country.

At the end of the activities, all the skills and experiences that emerged during the workshop can be reported in a profile created for each participant on the website

<https://europa.eu/europass/eportfolio>. Participants will thus be able to produce their own CV and concretely use it afterwards in job seeking.

Participant prerequisites

In accordance with the themes and objectives of the project in which this workshop was developed (intensifying the dialogue with female migrants through creative methods), the participants should possess **three main prerequisites** to be able to take part in the activities:

- 1- They should be women.
- 2- They should have a migration background.
- 3- They should have a knowledge of the country language (depending on where the course is held) reaching minimum a B1 level (CEFR levels, see below).

According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages, a person reaching the B1 level of language knowledge can:

- understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.
- deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken.
- produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest.
- describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

The characteristics of the CEFR levels can be consulted at:

<https://www.eui.eu/documents/servicesadmin/languagecentre/cef.pdf>

Having said that, it is important to mention that this curriculum can be adapted to different groups of participants. Indeed, the activities can be proposed to all adults and young adults, regardless of their gender. They do not necessarily need to be women. Moreover, the parts of the course referring specifically to migration experiences can be changed and adapted to the characteristics of the participants. For example, if the group members have a common background of another kind, the parts of the curriculum that deal with the elaboration of the past can be modified and adapted to be more compliant with their personal experiences.

Tips for the trainers

As a trainer, if you notice that the language knowledge of the participants is lower than requested or expected, you can find alternative strategies and means to facilitate communication and learning. For instance, nonverbal communication, such as communication through images, videos, and sounds, is notably a powerful and universal tool to understand each other when verbal communication encounters obstacles or is insufficient to convey a message. It is always possible to support the various parts of your course with slides or visual contents to enable all participants to gather the main points, even if they do not understand the verbal explanation completely.

Learning outcomes

The objective of this workshop is to produce an impact on participants in terms of self-awareness and knowledge. Indeed, the course aims at generating different **learning outcomes**, which are:

- ✓ Elaborate personal experiences before and after migration
- ✓ Reconstruct participants' stories and identify their own form points, weaknesses, risks, and opportunities for job searching
- ✓ Process and interpret personal journeys from the point of view of knowledge, competences, and talents
- ✓ Increase the chances of getting a job that is relevant to participants' strengths and abilities
- ✓ Learn some basic rules about self-presentation and work culture in the labour market of the country of arrival
- ✓ Improve in personal description vocabulary and verbal expression skills
- ✓ Discover strategies to handle a job interview in the country of arrival
- ✓ Explore the characteristics of body expressions and their different meanings, with a focus on the job interview context
- ✓ Acquire awareness of self-appearance and adjust some elements, such as posture and tone of voice, which might constitute an obstacle to succeed in a conversation
- ✓ Enhance the ability to communicate and interact with people who do not belong to one's own community (e.g., coming from another country) to increase the chances of establishing new relationships, expanding one's social and friendship network, contributing to better integration in the society.

The compendium of methods

Workshop schedule

	Contents	Activity	Didactic units
Introduction to the workshop	Self-presentation Presentation of the project: - the activities - expected results - expectation of participants - assessment questionnaire	The magic wand	2
The autobiographical journey: my life "before"	Reconstruction of the salient facts of life up to the time of departure from the country of origin	The Lifeline exercise (part 1)	2
The autobiographical journey: "during"	Memories of the journey	Evocative memories	1
The autobiographical journey: my life "after"	Life in the host country	The Lifeline exercise (part 2)	2
My competences	Analysis of competences	The SWOT analysis	2
My voice conveys information and emotions	Learning to use the voice	The meowing cats The colors of the voice	2
I tell my story	Preparation of the autobiographical contents of the video	Practical exercise	1
My story and the camera	Learning to speak in front of the camera	Practical exercise	2
Light, camera, action!	Video recording	Practical exercise	2
Let's go to the movies!	Video viewing	Discussion in plenary	2
My e-portfolio	Filling out the portfolio of competences Final assessment questionnaire	Individual session	2
Total units			20

Activity 1: The magic wand

Description

Adults learn best and are most receptive when they are comfortable with the people around them. An icebreaking game helps reducing tension and encourages participation in a group.

The aim of the icebreaking game “The magic wand” is to create a relaxed and positive atmosphere in the group by asking each participant to share a funny or personal thought with the others when it is their turn to hold the magic wand.

This icebreaking game is also a useful tool that allows the trainer to understand numerous things about the participants.

Contents

Participants, sitting in a circle, play the role of wizards and are asked to do an imagination exercise: they should think of something they would choose to change if they had a magic wand.

Passing around the wand (or an alternative object used) participants must give an answer to this question and use this excuse as an icebreaker to create a positive atmosphere in the group and get to know each other.

Tips for the trainers

Encourage everyone to have fun with the role of wizard or magician when answering and act out changing whatever they would change!

Also, it is possible to use different icebreaking games, a rich selection of which can be found in the **Compendium of methods**.

Activity 2: The lifeline exercise (Part 1)

Description

This is a very popular tool among career counsellors. The lifeline tool adapts to different discussions and purposes. It can be very effective when assisting individuals in organizing the order of events and highlight the positive factors in their experience, as well as challenges.

The activity brings forth a clearer picture of the individual's skills development as well as the factors which have had an impact on the person or his/her life. This exercise is designed to help participants reflect on their lives and identify experiences that shaped who they are today (in other words, a biographic work). It provides the opportunity to review the most significant experiences of private, school, and professional life to help individuals piece together their stories and recognize how much they learnt so far.

Since with the first part of the activity we want participants to realize what they have done and learnt throughout their lives in the country of origin, the exercise focuses on their lives before migration.

Contents

The main goal for participants is to draw their lifelines –from birth up to when they left their home country. They are asked to reflect upon the most significant changes in their life and the emotions they felt at that time.

The focus is on those events that had an impact on participants' lives and on their learning and education paths (school, experiences of work, moving house, moving from home, important life experiences, relationship, marriage, children, learning new skills, new information, surprising events that occurred...)

Tips for the trainers

Some participants may find this exercise difficult at first sight; if this is the case, try to help them by giving some inputs through general questions like: "How old were you when you finished school?" or "Have you always lived in the same house?"

Activity 3: Evocative memories

Description

Odors, music, objects, tastes, images: all our 5 senses are triggers of emotional memories that recall to mind situations, moods, feelings.

Through this activity, you will lead the participants to identify one thing they learnt during their migration journey, without having to go into detail about their experiences, which, in many cases, might have been highly traumatic.

Contents

Through newspapers and magazines provided by the trainer, participants should look for a picture that reminds them of their journey from home country to actual living place. It can be an object, a scent, a food, a song.

Participants are asked to recall memories and emotions and, afterwards, think about what they learnt because of/during the travel.

Tips for the trainers

Some examples of things learnt during the trip might be patience, dealing with stress, sticking to a schedule, dealing with fear, etc. Through this exercise, participants will start to identify and describe some of their social skills.

Activity 4: The lifeline exercise (Part 2)

Description

This is a very popular tool among career counsellors. The lifeline tool adapts to different discussions and purposes. It can be very effective when assisting individuals in organizing the order of events and highlight the positive factors in their experience, as well as challenges.

The activity brings forth a clearer picture of the individual's skills development as well as the factors which have had an impact on the person or his/her life. This exercise is designed to help participants reflect on their lives and identify experiences that shaped who they are today (in other words, a biographic work). It provides the opportunity to review the most significant experiences of private, school, and professional life to help individuals piece together their stories and recognize how much they learnt so far.

Through the second part of the activity, participants are asked to reflect upon what happened after the arrival in the destination country.

Contents

Women should draw their lifeline – moving from the arrival in the new country to current age – and take note of the significant events that occurred. Moreover, they are asked to highlight the feelings they had at the time.

These are examples of guiding questions:

- What experiences have I had since I arrived in my new country to date?
- How have these experiences influenced my development?
- Are there any themes/patterns which emerge?
- What values have been important for me along the way?
- What skills/knowledge/attitudes/behaviour have I developed along the way?
- When have I learned the most? How can this understanding help me with regard to my future development?
- What would I pick out as milestones/significant achievements?

Tips for the trainers

Before doing it, ask participants if they agree to discuss their Lifeline in plenary or if they prefer to do so individually. Some participants may not feel comfortable to talk about personal experiences in front of others.

Debrief using the following questions as a guideline:

- Do you notice any patterns emerging?
- What skills and abilities did you use in order to move out of the lows and to progress?
- Is there something that is there all the time, some sort of personal quality?
- Can you see something that sometimes has blocked your thinking, behaving, and feeling?

Activity 5: The SWOT analysis

Description

To achieve goals in life, work, education, it is essential to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats that are present. The awareness of these four aspects allows individuals to use them for their own advantage.

When people identify and understand their strengths and opportunities, they learn how to move forward with confidence and assurance. Just as if realizing one's weaknesses and threats that arise, one can focus on those areas, so as to improve the weaknesses and overcome the obstacles posed by threats.

SWOT analysis is the examination of personal situation by looking at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Contents

The purpose of a personal SWOT analysis is to evaluate the past, present, and future of personal or professional goals. If done properly, it enables to leverage strengths, improve weaknesses, mitigate threats, and identify opportunities. Doing a SWOT analysis provides a “snapshot” of the current situation and helps to evaluate and develop a strategy for work or life advancement.

The SWOT analysis is like a grid: the top half, that contains strengths and weaknesses, represents the internal factors, so those people have a high degree of control over. Meanwhile, the bottom half holds opportunities and threats, which are the external factors that people have limited or no control over.

The grid can be broken down also into the left and right sides. The left side with strengths and opportunities are generally helpful things that can be used to achieve personal goals. The right side contains weaknesses and threats, the roadblocks to development.

Opportunities are defined as external factors that are favourable to the goals set for the SWOT analysis. Threats, on the other hand, can have a negative effect on goals.

Participants must fill out a Personal SWOT matrix. Afterwards, they are asked to analyse the results in plenary or individually with the trainer(s).

Tips for the trainers

When they have finished their individual work, ask if everyone agrees to analyse their matrix in plenary. If yes, analyze the SWOT matrixes one by one. The post-its can be moved from one quadrant to another of the grid if, following the discussion, the participant understands that a threat, for example, may actually be an opportunity, and so on.

Do the debrief individually with participants who might prefer not to discuss their Personal SWOT analysis in plenary.

Activity 6a: The meowing cats

Description

Asking participants to express themselves meowing, show how the tone of the voice and the body language can communicate thoughts, feelings, and impressions in a very clear manner. The practical part of the activity is preparatory to the introduction of basic communication concepts.

Contents

All participants stand in a circle. One pair at a time stands in the middle and must play a pair of cats who are communicating. The pair must decide what the cats are communicating and then, just by meowing, must make the other participants understand what the topic of the "cat" communication is. At the end of the performance the other participants must guess the topic.

The trainer can suggest the couple in the middle of the circle to meow like two cats in love, two cats arguing, two cats hungry... It is important to make sure that, in addition to meowing, participants also express themselves using body language, facial expressions, and voice tones.

At the end of the game, talk about the basic concepts of communication. Communication consists of three ingredients:

- verbal language (the words);
- nonverbal language (that of the body);
- paraverbal language (tone of voice, pauses and intersperses).

Nonverbal counts for 55%, paraverbal for 38%, and verbal for only 7%.

Therefore, just as in life both the heart and the brain are needed, in communication both the content (what you say) and the container (how you say it) count.

Tips for the trainers

Two strategies to keep in mind: first, if you see that the exercise does not start because the participants feel embarrassed or do not understand the purpose, be the first one to step in the middle and show how to do it; second, if there are many participants and the exercise becomes less funny and interesting after a while, give it a twist by introducing a new animal into the activity.

Activity 6b: The colours of the voice

Description

The purpose of this activity is to introduce the issue of the importance of tone and voice modulation in different communicative contexts, where a voice that is too soft or too loud can compromise results, as, for example, in the case of a job interview.

Thanks to the theory of the colors of the voice, participants will learn about situations where one "colour" is preferable to another and how to use the correct one.

Contents

At the beginning of the activity, the trainer explains to participants what the expressive elements and colours of the voice are.

Afterwards, the group explores different voice expressions by standing in a circle and pronouncing some sentences using a specific voice "colour" indicated by the trainer.

Through the exercise, the participants should try as many different voices as possible, in order to learn the relevance of the tone of voice to be used according to the type of content to communicate.

Tips for the trainers

It is significant to do this exercise standing up in a circle and not sitting down. The reason is that, when the participants will try to do a specific voice, most of the times they will unconsciously do a body or facial expression as well. This represents the perfect time to become aware of the unconscious gestures we all make when we communicate and ask participants to do the effort of separating their words from their body reactions, and to concentrate specifically on the tone of the voice.

Activity 7: I tell my story

Description

This activity represents the first step for the creation of each participant's personal video. The creation of the video pursues several objectives, such as:

- Reflecting upon the personal history to be told in the self-introduction video
- Learning how to select the contents to include in the video in relation to its final goal
- Learning how to communicate the contents to an audience
- Improving through self-critique after seeing themselves in the video
- Learning how to introduce themselves, for instance, in a job interview

The first activity for the video creation is the preparation of the autobiographical contents to include in it.

Contents

Participants should write the storyboard of a self-presentation video, in which they are asked to introduce themselves to a general public, putting in evidence their competences, talents, and strengths, and maybe also how they have acquired them. The video should be short (approximately 2 minutes).

The participants are asked to take into consideration all the things they have learnt about themselves and communication techniques during the previous activities.

Tips for the trainers

If the participants seem blocked, give them some advice: they can start from a brainstorming of ideas, find the most effective order to present them, and then write the final storyboard.

Activity 8: My story and the camera

Description

After writing the storyboard, it is time to prepare for its presentation. The participants must finalize and then rehearse their speech, with the help of their mates.

The participants should recap all the knowledge gained during the workshop about verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal communication, and try to put it into practice.

Another aim of the activity is to discover and overcome any difficulty that may occur while talking about one's own and personal characteristics.

Contents

The participants are asked to prepare for speaking in front of the camera, putting into practice all the teachings they learnt during the workshop (posture, body language, voice, contents).

The trainer invites the participants to practice their speech first individually, and afterwards to do it in couples. The participants are asked to memorize their speech and get ready to play it in front of a camera.

Tips for the trainers

Walk around the room and listen to parts of the speeches: if you notice that some people are not using a proper and differentiated tone of voice to tell the story, remind them how important it is and what they learnt in the exercise "The colours of the voice".

Activity 9: Light, camera, action!

Description

It is now time to confront with the camera. Recording is a delicate part of video creation, since the participants are now exposed and asked to feel comfortable to talk about themselves in front of the whole group and of a fictional audience.

Nevertheless, this phase is also particularly important because it represents the moment in which the person finally realises what she/he is actually ready to tell in front of a public, as well as what seems more convenient to say or not to say.

Contents

The trainer finds a spot where to record the video and invites one volunteer to be the first to record it. The 2 minutes recording requires silence and attention from the other members of the group. It might be necessary to do more than one take to complete one video, but it is important not to lose too much time and to maintain a certain “spontaneity” of the acting (some small mistakes might occur, but this does not represent an issue). The same procedure is repeated for all participants.

Tips for the trainers

Some people might be very shy and not willing to record their video in front of others. In this case, it is recommended to find a different and more private place for the recording, and to find some strategies to put the person at ease (for instance, by provoking a laugh or by asking what her/his fears are).

Activity 10: Let's go to the movies!

Description

The last activity connected to the videos consists of a viewing in plenary session. This step is fundamental for the participants to see themselves from the outside, to understand how they look and sound when they talk about themselves and try to tell their strengths and abilities. It represents a moment of self-critique, but also an occasion to receive some helpful advice from the other members of the group. Depending on the group, it might be also a very funny moment.

Contents

All the participants and trainers sit together in the room and watch the videos recorded. After each video, the protagonist and the group have a short time to discuss and make some comments about it. The guiding questions for the discussion are:

- Was it a clear and convincing speech?
- Was the voice used properly?
- Was the posture accurate?
- Was the person able to look straight into the camera?
- Did the personal skills and potentials emerge during the speech?

Tips for the trainers

For this activity, it is highly important to build the right atmosphere, clarifying to the participants that the discussion should be a constructive confrontation based on reciprocal respect and positive cooperation, meant to support the improvement of each participant's ability of self-presentation. The trainer's aim is to avoid or mitigate comments that sound judgmental, rude, or assertive.

Activity 11: My e-portfolio

Description

One last individual session concludes the activities. The trainer sits with each participant individually and together they recall and collect all the characteristics about her/him (skills, experiences, talents, strengths, etc.) that emerged throughout the workshop. The focus then passes on soft skills, and all information are then used to create an e-portfolio of competences for each participant.

At the end of this last activity, participants are asked to evaluate the workshop by taking the final assessment questionnaire.

Contents

At the beginning of the individual session, the participants must complete a “Soft skills e-portfolio”, choosing from a list which skills they think they possess. This portfolio is thought to be an initial useful step for writing a resume to apply for a job position and choose the soft skills that are most relevant to that specific job.

Afterwards, based on this list of skills and on all the things discovered during the workshop, the trainer and the participant open the Europass website and create a profile and an “e-portfolio” of competences for the participant. In this way, participants will be able to produce their own CV and use it afterwards in job seeking.

After all individual sessions have been completed, the participants fill out the final assessment questionnaire of the workshop, provided by the trainer.

Tips for the trainers

After the workshop and the time spent together with the participants, the trainer knows them and their characteristics relatively well. However, while filling out the soft skills list, the trainer should make the effort of maintaining a role of support, without substituting the participant in the completion work. The participant should be one identifying and recognising her/his own competences.