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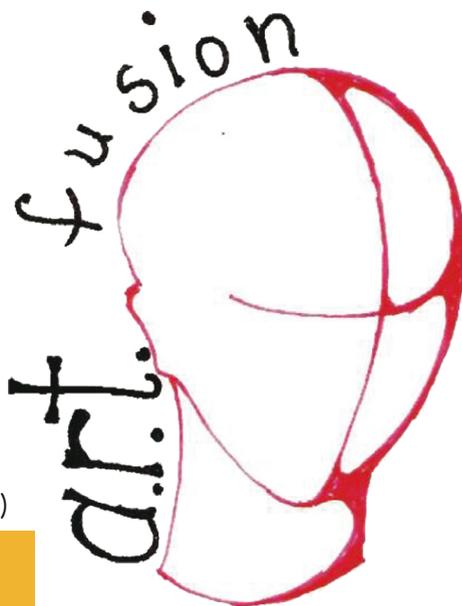
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YOUTH WITH A GLOBAL VISION

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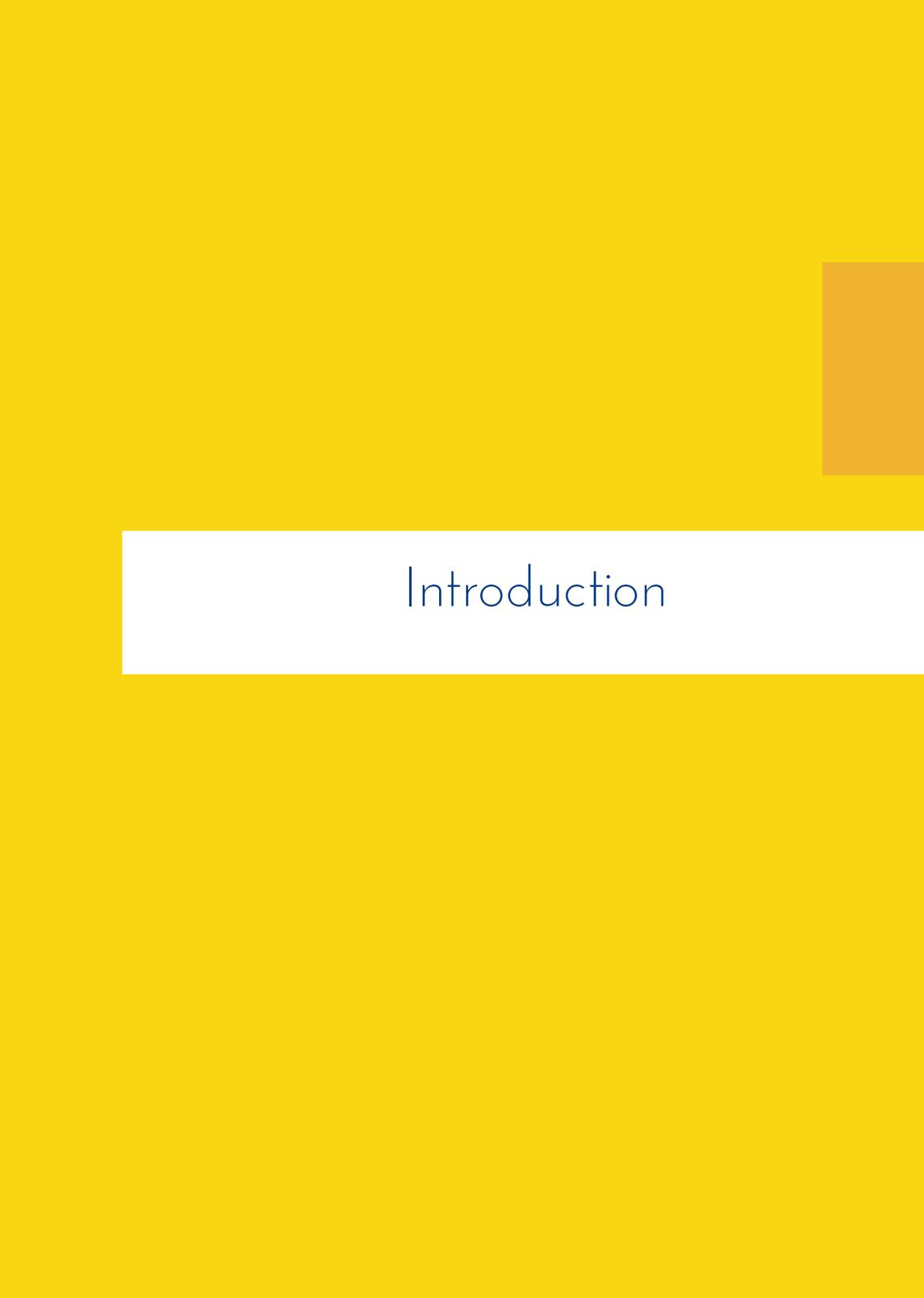
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Introduction

”A stranger is a friend you haven’t met yet”. This antiracist slogan is very simple, yet very complex. It is a slogan which points to dialogue with those we might consider “strangers”.¹

This slogan is a good introduction to the idea of a Human Library. The Human Library offers people the opportunity of discussing personally with someone they might consider a “stranger” in a structured, protected way, within a time limit, but without any following commitments. This framework is probably one of the reasons why the Human Library was so popular everywhere it was organized, throughout the world and particularly in UK and Romania. The Human Library is a creative and innovative method presented in this guide aims at provoking interpersonal dialogue between people who wouldn’t normally get a chance to talk in an organized setting.

The Romanian and British organizations that work in the field of intercultural dialogue, diversity, or simply, in the area of youth and adult education, are often faced with the challenge of finding new and innovative methods of attracting people’s attention towards issues of diversity in a simple and effective way. Human Library represents an opportunity for intercultural dialogue and personal growth directed towards people who usually have very little contact with non-formal education programs.

¹ Ronni Abergel, Antje Rothemund, Gavan Titley, Péter Wootsch, DON’T JUDGE A BOOK BY IT’S COVER, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Programme “Youth promoting human rights and social cohesion”, Ungaria, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005

This publication, made possible with the support of the European Commission through the Youth in Action Programme, was created as a means of promoting the methodology of the Human Library in UK and Romania. This guide, which will be made available to all the organizers of Human Libraries around Romania and UK, sums up the cumulated experience of several organizers, librarians, books and readers, all of which were involved in similar events conducted in 2009-2011 and organised by A.R.T. Fusion and its partners.

The purpose of this publication is to encourage and offer support to those who undertake the coordination of a Human Library. Through this guide we do not intend to offer the perfect recipe for the organization of a Human library because every library has its own basic ingredients and everything else is adapted by each and every organizer according to local circumstances. However, there's a clear limit in what regards the adaptation of the method. It is desired by the creators that this limit be respected. "Good tools" are required for building an authentic Human Library, but if these tools are used to less-than-honourable ends, then they could lead to an incorrect use of the methodology and of the purpose to which it was initiated. It is the wish of the creators of this method that it be promoted and applied responsibly and correctly.

" Human Library is not a PR exercise in search of flashy titles, it is not an exhibition of rare objects and most particularly, it is not an recruiting agency for famous people. The Human Library is a dialogue instrument which brings people closer together in order to promote respect for human dignity and individual identity".²

² Ronni Abergel, Antje Rothemund, Gavan Titley, Péter Wootsch, DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY IT'S COVER, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Programme "Youth promoting human rights and social cohesion", Ungaria, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005

Thus, Human Library has every intention of drawing attention towards the acceptance of diversity because, often times, differences between people are not valued as resources. Most times, these differences lead to labelling, prejudice and ultimately to discrimination, suspicion and exclusion.

The books found within the Human Library are **people** representing different groups that encounter or are likely to be met with **prejudice and stereotypes** (regarding their gender, age, education, job, ethnicity, race, religion, etc.) and who might fall **victims to discrimination** and social exclusion, or eventually they can just be people with stories that could give the reader a unique learning experience in the field of **diversity**.

Within the Human Library, **the reader** can be anyone who's willing to face their own prejudice and stereotypes. He or she is a person who wishes to spend 50 minutes of his or her time in order to obtain a learning experience full of significance. Within the library, the books not only talk, but also answer questions, they themselves being able to ask questions so as the learning experience would go both ways.

PART I. Diversity

What is Diversity?

...and how does it work?

There are many things to say about DIVERSITY. There are so many papers, articles, researches, doctoral thesis, etc. So we will not try to use a definition with complicated words, instead we will create our own definitions and keep it simple.

Diversity is **NOT**:

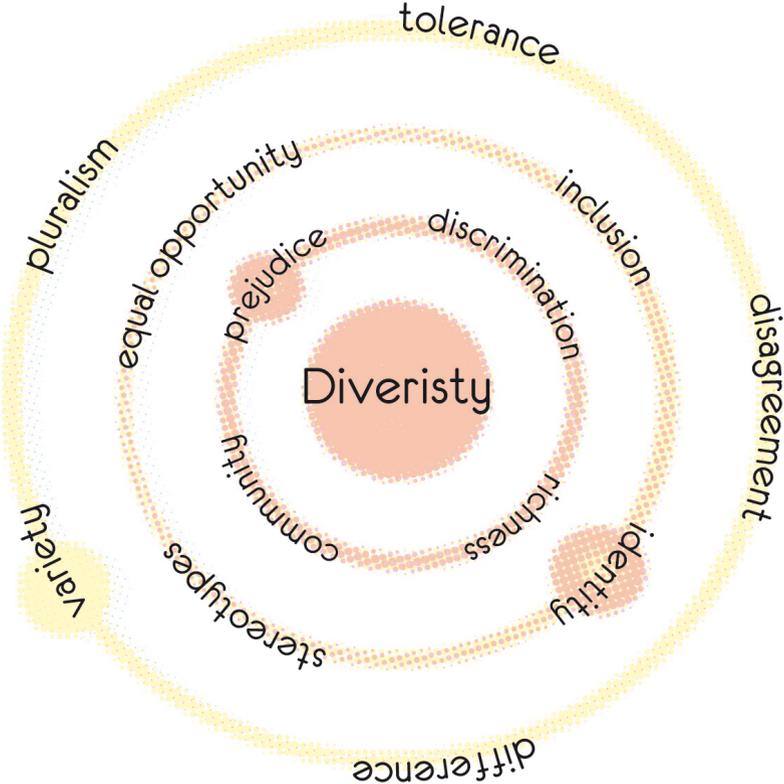
- ▶ About reducing standards
- ▶ About removing our prejudices - it is about recognising they exist and then questioning them before we act
- ▶ A distraction from more important business issues. Like quality, it is a standard by which our business performance is measured
- ▶ About positive discrimination. It is about positive action
- ▶ Just about the way we use language and so-called political correctness. It is about discussing openly and honestly our differences in order to gain a better understanding of each other.¹

Everyone is different; everyone has different abilities, skills and resources. From our point of view, DIVERSITY is not only about celebrating the fact that people are different in many visible and invisible ways, but also about valuing and using these differences as learning resources. Being different should not be considered a bad thing, instead we could use difference as a way to get ourselves out from our comfort zone and learn more about ourselves and our society.

¹ RESPECTING DIVERSITY - TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD OF DIVERSITY, British Council Romania, 2010, pg 7.

Diversity is the opposite to uniformity and it suggests variety, richness, colour, salt and pepper in our lives. Celebrating diversity implies celebrating differences. Difference is a given, is not an option, and Diversity is a given also. We could celebrate diversity and regard everyone as unique and precious because these differences give us a unique view of the world and a distinctive range of attributes and skills. Our differences include age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, educational background, physical abilities, nationality, marital status, work experience and all other experiences we have lived and that influenced thinking.

Diversity builds on concepts such as:



These notions are no longer unknown to us; they have become part of our reality. People have become increasingly aware of their existence and effect. The attempt to understand in depth why we assign attributes based on pre-conceptions, without knowing the details of individuality, has become increasingly important in today's society.

What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you say French, Italian, British, Spanish or Romanian? Champagne and arrogance, they speak a lot and with many gestures, cold people that invented tea drinking and biscuits, party people and flamenco, Gypsy and watch the wallet! Have you ever asked yourself: why do we make assessments about people who in reality we have never met? Working with diversity involves an understanding of these concepts.¹



So, now you know what you have to do, right? Open yourself up to the wonderful world of Diversity, explore it and take all the knowledge you need from it! Celebrate individuality and richness of experience and thank goodness we are not all the same!

¹ RESPECTING DIVERSITY - TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD OF DIVERSITY, British Council Romania, 2010, pg 10.

Diversity legislation in the United Kingdom

Ethnicity / Race / Belief

Race Relations Act 1976

Employment Equality Regulations Act

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

e.g. it is against the law for public authorities to discriminate against anyone on grounds of race colour or nationality

Age

Children Acts 1989 & 2004

Age Discrimination Act 2006

e.g. date of birth need not be declared for many jobs

Disability

Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 & 2005

e.g. all applicants for jobs with a disability must be shortlisted for interview

Gender

Sexual Discrimination Act 1975 Civil Partnership

Act 2004

e.g. equality of pay for men and women e.g. same gender civil marriages

Equal Opportunities

Equality Act 2006 set up Equalities & Human Rights Commission, this is the umbrella body with authority over all these diversity areas

Sexuality

Sex discrimination Act 1976 SD (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

e.g. it is against the law to discriminate against LGBT people (lesbian - gay - bisexual - transgender)

Diversity legislation in Romania

Ordinance no. 137 from 31 August 2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination

Government Decision no. 1194/2001 regarding the organisation and functioning of the National Council for Combating Discrimination

Law no. 202 from 19 April 2002 regarding equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men

Decision no. 484 from May 2007 regarding the approval of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men statute

Law no. 448/2006 from 06/12/2006 regarding the protection and the promotion of the rights of the disabled persons

Ordinance no.14 from 30 January 2003 regarding the setting up, organisation and functioning of the National Authority for Disabled Persons

Government Emergency Ordinance no. 78 from 7 October regarding the setting up of the National Agency for Roma

Emergency ordinance no.89 from 21 June 2001 regarding the changing of some clauses of the Penal Code on offences on sexual life

National Agency for Disabled Persons

www.anph.ro

National Agency for Roma

www.anr.gov.ro

Department for Interethnic Relations

<http://www.dri.gov.ro/>

Romanian public institutions which promote diversity

National Council for Combating Discrimination

www.cncd.org.ro

National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men

www.anes.ro

Part II. How to ... Human Library

The Human Library encourages the audience to ponder over their own prejudices and stereotypes. We believe that each of us has prejudices or stereotypes that we are unaware of and that we only recognize under certain circumstances, but within a different setting we might not identify. It's very easy to have prejudices and stereotypes towards a group of people at a remote distance from us, but it is more difficult to maintain such prejudice when we're interacting with someone whom we're prejudiced against and we get to see them from a different angle. Many times over, I've heard things like *"I don't like gypsies, but I like Cristi, even thou he is a gypsy because I know him and he is very nice"*.¹ Therefore, the basic idea of a Human library is that of creating a physical space decorated as a library filled with books, within which people come to discuss and observe diversity from a different angle.

However, when we wish to organize this space of the Human Library, we must take into consideration a lot of aspects like: the library's objectives, the space within which the library would be organized, ways of recruiting books, ways of promoting the library, ways of evaluating the impact of the library upon the readers and books etc.

In the following chapters we will discuss each of these aspects, so as to offer the basic information for each step of the organization of the Human Library.

¹ Ronni Abergel, Antje Rothemund, Gavan Titley, Péter Wootsch, *DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY IT'S COVER*, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Programme "Youth promoting human rights and social cohesion", Ungaria, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005

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