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GRASS AND ROOTS: A REFLECTIVE INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION SYLLABUS FOR REFUGEE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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This training is therefore not only the result of a pedagogical design, but also the product of a collective journey built through trust, commitment, and shared experience.

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Grass and Roots: A Reflective Intercultural Mediation Syllabus for Refugee Community Engagement

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Introduction

The meetings for the Training in Intercultural Mediation described in this syllabus have been implemented within an already existing project taking place in Siena, Italy, at Nuova Associazione Culturale Ulisse (NACU), where a regular weekly appointment between the trainees and the trainer, SIS Intercultural Study Abroad Founder and Director Lavinia Bracci, has long been established, together with concrete service-learning activities carried out in the local community. These activities were originally developed within the framework of the *Home 4 the World*² (H4W) programme, a NACU community-based initiative launched in 2022 in collaboration with SIS Intercultural Study Abroad, aimed at fostering inclusion, mutual support, and active participation of migrants and local residents through shared learning and service. Bringing this ongoing initiative into the framework of the MILAGRO (**MI**migrants and **L**ocal communities **Actively GROW**ing together for inclusive societies) project³ has made it possible to deepen the analysis of specific themes related to intercultural mediation, and to further strengthen the development of trainees' mediating competences.

This integration has also allowed us to highlight a core methodological principle that guides NACU's work with asylum seekers: the idea that refugee students⁴ can—and should—be empowered to become active social agents in their own integration process, rather than passive recipients of training, support or assistance. This vision is deeply rooted in the **EUFICCS approach (European Use of Full-Immersion, Culture, Content, and Service)**, an educational framework originally developed for international students (Biagi & Bracci, 2020). Within EUFICCS, students are consistently engaged in a structured process of guided reflection, experiential learning, and community involvement, which supports them in acquiring intercultural competence as a key dimension of successful integration in the host society.

Over the past years, NACU has adapted and applied the EUFICCS pedagogical philosophy *mutatis mutandis* to the context of asylum seekers and refugees. In this perspective, trainees are not simply learning about intercultural mediation; they are actively participating in community-based actions, reflecting on their own intercultural experiences, and progressively shaping themselves into bridge-builders between cultures. A clear example of this approach is the spontaneous formation of the volunteer group “Grass and Roots” created by refugees themselves to support newly arrived individuals in Siena, which progressively took shape under the attentive guidance of NACU intercultural mediator. Their volunteer engagement—conceived not as merely ancillary but rather as an essential component of the training process—enables them to contribute to the community while

¹ Lead author and primary writer.

² <https://www.nuovaassociazioneulisse.com/home-4-the-world/>

³ <https://milagroproject.eu/>

⁴ The use of the term *refugee students* in this document reflects a specific ideological choice. It does not refer solely to refugees enrolled in European universities, but to every refugee who undertakes an active and committed path in studying the host country's language(s), learning more about the local culture(s) and communities, and/or acquiring specific skills. This choice is deeply rooted in NACU's philosophy and has always been used in the activities of *Home 4 the World*, in the awareness that words confer dignity. The efforts and challenges that refugees have to face to acquire language, culture, general knowledge and skills of the host country turns them into full-fledged students which is a fundamental step for the acquisition of citizenship.

simultaneously strengthening their sense of agency, belonging, and professional identity. Through this combination of service, reflection, and structured training, mediation competences emerge not only as theoretical knowledge but as lived practice.

Within MILAGRO, this approach gains new relevance and visibility. It provides a coherent conceptual framework tying together training, reflection, and community service, and positioning refugee trainees as co-creators of intercultural understanding within their local environments.

The following sections of this syllabus illustrate how this methodology has been implemented and what learning outcomes have emerged through the sustained collaboration between NACU, the trainees, and the broader community. Specifically, it focuses on the implementation of the reflective component of this methodology.

The training process was also complemented by two online sessions organised in collaboration with University College Utrecht. These meetings offered participants the opportunity to engage in intercultural dialogue with external contributors and reflect on themes such as value frameworks, intercultural mediation, and the role of language and social networks in processes of integration. Particularly meaningful for the participants was the opportunity to interact with scholars who themselves had experienced forced migration and are now attempting to pursue academic careers in the Netherlands, while also working as volunteers for newcomers, offering a powerful example of possible trajectories of integration and social engagement.

The EUFICCS Approach for Refugee Students

The case of MILAGRO in Siena

The EUFICCS educational framework, initially developed for international and exchange students, has proved to be replicable and functional for refugees and people with different migration backgrounds and profiles, more broadly demonstrating the inherent flexibility of the approach.

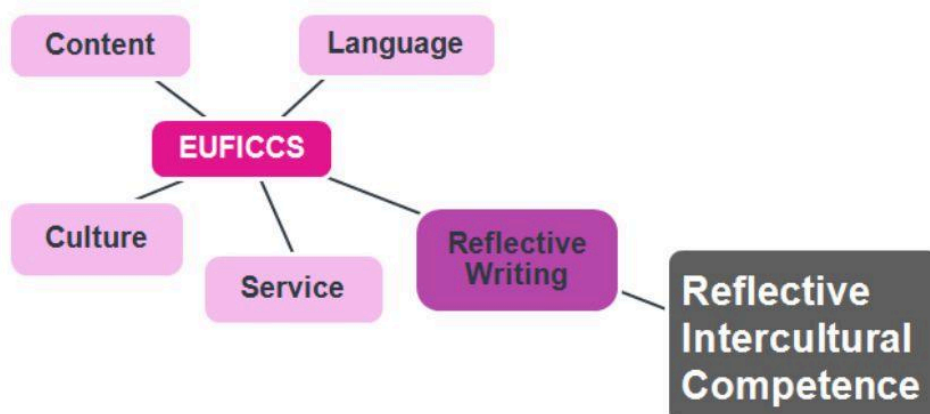


Figure 1 - EUFICCS approach components (Biagi & Bracci, 2020, p. 29)

However, while for international students full immersion represents a temporary, intentional, and pedagogically structured experience, for refugees it constitutes a permanent and often involuntary life

condition. Refugees are immersed in the host society on a daily basis, across linguistic, social, institutional, and emotional dimensions, without the possibility of “stepping out” of the experience. Within this context, immersion is not primarily a learning strategy, but a necessity of survival and adaptation.

For this reason its components are here reinterpreted in light of the refugee students' peculiar and often forced experience of integration. In this regard, the EUFICCS team in Siena believes that in order to fully reshape the approach for migrants and refugees, particular attention must be paid but not limited to the psychological and material consequences of a forced experience, the resulting culture shock, potential coping mechanisms, and the impact of all of these factors on learning outcomes. Only by adopting such a comprehensive and holistic approach it will be possible to effectively redesign all EUFICCS components.

The following are some initial reflections on the adaptation of the components in order to work with migrants and refugees.

Service

For refugee students engagement in service is considered a universal and intrinsic dimension of their active participation. All refugees involved are active agents contributing to the host community, not merely recipients of aid. This principle is exemplified in Siena, where Pakistani refugees spontaneously formed a volunteer group called “Grass and Roots” to address the needs of newly arrived individuals. In essence, NACU helped to give structure to this organic chain of migration and mutual aid, an initiative that had already taken place within the *Home 4 the World* project. Thanks to MILAGRO, this existing, community-led action was then successfully translated into a structured intercultural mediation training where service provided by the volunteers to the newcomers together with the appropriate learning selected by the trainers offered the opportunity to critically reflect on their own intercultural learning. This experiment represents a wonderful example of the application of the service-learning pedagogy to the context of refugees and asylum seekers. In the case of “Grass and Roots”, this commitment to service was not only socially and pedagogically meaningful, but also closely aligned with Islamic ethical principles expressed in the Qur’an, especially those related to solidarity, hospitality, and care for vulnerable members of the community.

Culture

For refugee students, cultural immersion is rarely a voluntary or gradual experience; rather, it often takes the form of a sudden and forced encounter with the social, linguistic and institutional norms of the host society. This accelerated exposure can generate significant forms of acculturative stress and cultural disorientation. For this reason, NACU aims to develop targeted activities designed to support participants in recognising, coping with and transforming the experience of culture shock into a process of conscious intercultural learning.

Language

For refugee students, Italian (or the host country’s language) represents a fundamental and essential tool for social participation, access to rights, and active citizenship. The acquisition of Italian as a second language (L2) constitutes a necessary foundation for integration and inclusion.

However, within the EUFICCS approach adapted to refugees and migrants, language learning cannot be reduced to a monolingual and assimilative perspective. Instead, it is framed within a broader vision

of plurilingualism and linguistic mediation, where multiple languages coexist, interact, and reinforce each other.

Refugee students often possess rich and complex linguistic repertoires, including their mother tongue(s), regional languages, and the so-called “bridge languages” (such as English, Arabic, Urdu, French, or others) acquired through migration trajectories. These languages represent not an obstacle, but a valuable cultural, cognitive, and relational resource.

The EUFICCS approach therefore promotes the recognition and valorisation of students’ linguistic heritage as an integral part of their learning process and personal identity. By acknowledging and legitimising their multilingual backgrounds, educational contexts foster self-esteem, motivation, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Language education is thus conceived as a dynamic, inclusive, and reciprocal process, where Italian as a L2 develops alongside the maintenance and appreciation of other languages. This plurilingual environment facilitates intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and meaningful participation in both academic and community life

For refugee students Italian (or the host country's language) is the fundamental and essential tool for integration. Language acquisition is the necessary basis without which any other path to inclusion would be unfeasible.

Content

Within the EUFICCS framework, the concept of the “non-level” was originally developed to acknowledge that language acquisition often emerges through exposure, interaction, and lived experience rather than through rigid progression across formal linguistic stages.

In the case of refugee learners, however, this condition is not pedagogically introduced but structurally imposed. Refugees are immediately immersed in complex linguistic and informational environments where content, language, and action are inseparable. In this sense, the “non-level” does not represent an alternative methodological option, but rather the starting point of their learning trajectory.

Reflection

The role of reflection within this re-elaborated EUFICCS framework can also be understood through the concept of Reflective Intercultural Competence (RIC), defined by Biagi and Bracci as “an intercultural competence gained through a structured and guided reflection process”, developed by learners in a formal setting through guided yet open reflective practice on different aspects of the local culture, with the mediation of an instructor who has mastery of the local cultural system and of intercultural relations and communication. In this perspective, RIC implies a conscious elaboration of intercultural encounters, allowing the full engagement of the learner and supporting the transition from experience to social agency in the host culture (Biagi & Bracci, 2020, p. 76).

Reflection and critical thinking represent the core transversal dimensions of service-learning and experiential education, as they enable participants to transform lived experience into meaningful learning, intercultural competence, and civic awareness. Through structured reflection, learners are

supported in analysing social realities, questioning assumptions, and developing a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

However, it is essential to reconsider the centrality of written reflection within individual reflective activities. Refugees often demonstrate a strong capacity for critical elaboration and sophisticated insight, yet expecting these reflections to be systematically expressed in written form may be unrealistic and, in some cases, exclusionary. For this reason, reflective processes should be grounded in empathy, attentive listening, and relational trust. Facilitators are encouraged to create spaces where reflection can emerge through dialogue, storytelling, silence, artistic expression, or shared experience, rather than only through writing. The educator's role is not merely to collect reflections, but to accompany them with sensitivity and openness, recognising that meaningful learning often unfolds in non-linear and culturally situated ways.

The readings indicated in the syllabus should therefore be understood as optional stimuli rather than prescriptive requirements. They are offered to inspire, inform, or deepen reflection when it does not arise spontaneously, and to provide conceptual tools for those who wish to engage with them. Their purpose is to support reflection, not to regulate it.

Social Acting

Within the EUFICCS framework, the ultimate goal of experiential and reflective learning — also in the context of refugee education — is the transition from participation to social acting. This stage represents the full maturation of the reflective–intercultural process: learners are no longer positioned as observers or beneficiaries within the host society, but begin to perceive themselves as active contributors capable of shaping social reality.

For refugees, this transition carries particular significance. While their arrival in the host country may initially be marked by vulnerability, uncertainty, and dependence on institutional systems, the EUFICCS approach seeks to support a gradual repositioning of the learner as a civic subject endowed with agency, voice, and responsibility. Through service, intercultural mediation, language acquisition, and reflective processes, participants progressively transform lived experience into competence, and competence into action.

A concrete example of this transition can be observed in Siena through the volunteer initiative “Grass and Roots”. What began as a spontaneous network of mutual aid among Pakistani refugees supporting newly arrived community members gradually evolved into a structured learning environment within the MILAGRO project. Through training, guided reflection, and intercultural mediation practices, participants moved from informal solidarity to conscious civic engagement. In this sense, “Grass and Roots” exemplifies how service-learning can support refugees in shifting from positions of assistance to roles of social agency, thus embodying the very essence of social acting.

This transition closely resonates with the vision promoted by the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC). The framework emphasises that democratic participation requires not only knowledge and skills, but also attitudes, values, and the willingness to act in the public sphere. When refugee learners engage in community service, mediation, and collective initiatives, they develop precisely those competences — such as openness to cultural otherness, civic responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and critical understanding — that enable individuals to participate actively in democratic societies.

At the social acting stage, individuals often describe themselves as navigating multiple cultural frames simultaneously. This condition may initially generate a sense of suspension between different cultural worlds and worldviews; however, it can also foster the emergence of a plural or multicultural identity, understood not as a loss of belonging but as an expanded capacity for mediation, interpretation, and social engagement. As already noted in the EUFICCS literature, when learners reach this stage, they no longer remain bystanders but begin to act as social actors within the host culture, transforming knowledge into competence and competence into socially meaningful action (Biagi & Bracci, 2020). The ability to move across cultural models thus becomes not a sign of dislocation, but a resource that can be mobilised in community contexts, democratic participation, and professional pathways.

In this perspective, EUFICCS does not aim merely at adaptation or integration, but at the development of socially engaged individuals capable of contributing to inclusive and democratic societies. The achievement of social acting therefore marks not the end of the learning trajectory, but the beginning of a renewed cycle of intercultural encounters in which former learners become mediators, facilitators, and agents of change within their communities.

Training Syllabus

The Reflective Intercultural Mediation Syllabus presented here is grounded in the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) (Barrett et al., 2018), understood not merely as a theoretical set of competences, but as a practical compass enabling refugees to orient themselves socially, culturally, and civically within European societies.

At its core, the syllabus is also inspired by the principles of education for empathy, which emphasise the development of perspective-taking, emotional awareness, respect for diversity, and the capacity to recognise oneself as part of an interconnected social fabric. Within this approach, empathy is not treated as a purely individual disposition but as a democratic competence that supports participation, dialogue, and coexistence.

The reflective dimension of the following syllabus is therefore conceived as a structured yet flexible process through which participants can progressively explore their experiences, relationships, and roles within the host community. Reflection becomes the bridge between lived experience and democratic competence, allowing individuals to transform everyday encounters into learning opportunities that foster agency and belonging.

The version presented in this document has been specifically adapted for the volunteer group "Grass and Roots", composed of asylum seekers and refugees acting as aspiring intercultural mediators. Their experience demonstrates how reflection, empathy, and democratic competences can be cultivated simultaneously through service, peer support, and community engagement.

However, this implementation should be understood as an illustrative case rather than a fixed model. The syllabus is intentionally designed to be flexible, transferable, and scalable. Its structure allows adaptation to different literacy levels, linguistic contexts, and institutional settings, making it suitable for implementation in reception centres, community programs, training courses for mediators, and other educational environments working with migrants and refugees. Derived from the two-year experience of the 'Grass and Roots' group, this syllabus is a flexible and replicable prototype. Consequently, the 10-week structure is illustrative and can be fully adapted to different contexts and durations.

In this sense, the syllabus does not represent a closed curriculum but a living pedagogical framework — one that can be re-shaped according to context while maintaining its core orientation towards empathy, democratic culture, and inclusive participation.

Syllabus structure and contents

For practical implementation, the syllabus is organised in a two-column table broken down by week: one column presents the reflective prompts addressed to participants each week, while the parallel column provides pedagogical guidance and facilitation notes for trainers and educators. The readings and materials included in the two-column table (and then provided again in the reference list) are conceived as pedagogical resources for instructors rather than compulsory study material. They are meant to serve as inputs that can be adapted to the group's needs, linguistic abilities, and learning context, supporting discussion rather than formal textual analysis. The syllabus also includes some additional resources for instructors, as well as a list of films that may serve as supplementary material, either for in-class viewing or for individual watching, to stimulate participants' reflection.

To make the competence-based rationale underpinning this reflective syllabus explicit, the visual model of the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) (Barrett et al., 2018) is included here as an accompanying reference (see Figure 2). The RFCDC butterfly (or flower) had already been adopted in previous EUFICCS-based syllabi for international students, notably in *Reflective Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture and Engaged Citizens* (Biagi & Bracci, 2020), where the RFCDC provided the conceptual foundation of the pedagogical approach, framing reflection, intercultural experience, and democratic learning outcomes within a shared competence-based perspective. Its inclusion in the present syllabus therefore reflects a deliberate continuity of pedagogical approach. Rather than introducing an additional theoretical layer, the figure serves as a conceptual compass situating weekly prompts, service-learning activities, and reflective processes within a broader developmental trajectory. By visualising how lived experience can foster values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding, the model helps both instructors and participants recognise the pathway from reflection to intercultural competence and, ultimately, to active democratic participation.

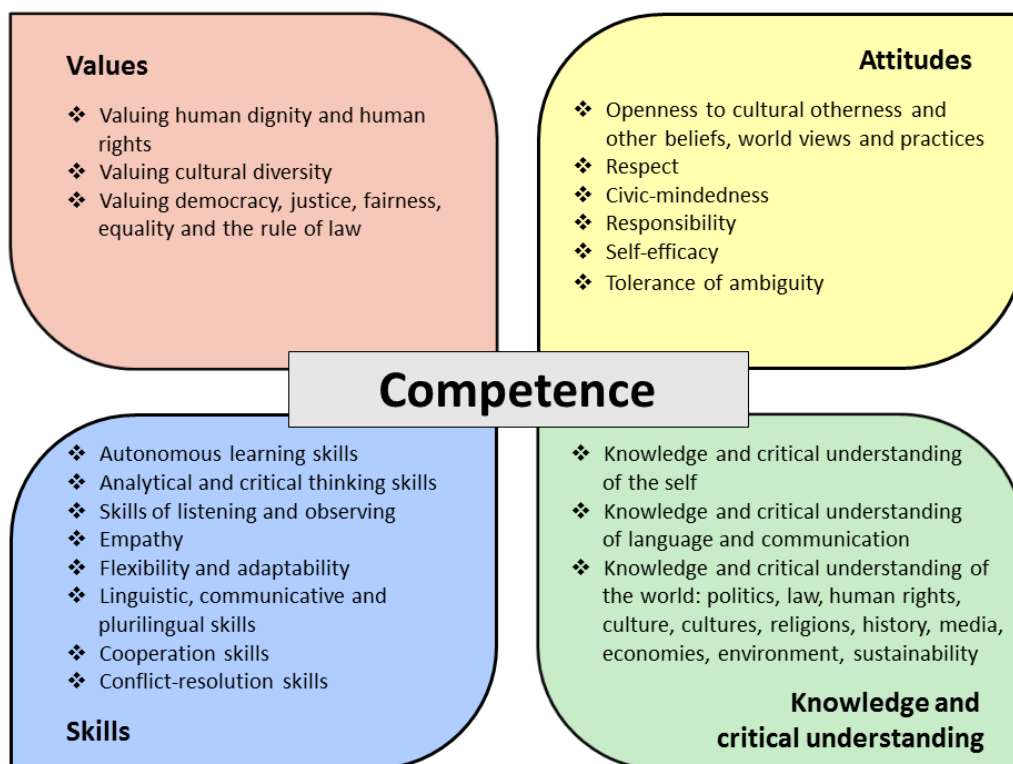


Figure 2 - The RFCDC butterfly developed by Council of Europe

The table below outlines the themes and structure of the Reflective Intercultural Mediation Syllabus developed within the MILAGRO project.

As previously stated, it presents the weekly reflective prompts for participants (left side of the table) alongside facilitation guidance for trainers (right side of the table), ensuring a coherent link between service experience, reflection, and the development of intercultural and democratic competences. In the table, readings and videos are intentionally referred to as “Inputs for reflection” rather than as required or suggested readings. This choice of terminology reflects the extremely heterogeneous educational backgrounds of participants, which range from individuals with little or no formal schooling to highly educated participants, including university graduates. For this reason, the syllabus does not prescribe a fixed sequence of readings as it would normally occur in a conventional academic setting. Instead, materials and resources are offered as more flexible inputs that trainers can adapt according to the linguistic abilities, literacy levels, and learning needs of the group.

Prompts for students	Guidelines for instructors
<p>Orientation</p> <p>What are your expectations for this course?</p>	<p>Orientation</p> <p>Course introduction.</p>
<p>Week 1</p> <p>Before we begin our discussion, we invite you to take a few minutes to reflect in a different way — through drawing.</p> <p>On your paper, please draw two simple images:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One showing something in Siena that made you feel welcome, safe, or happy. ● One showing something that has been difficult, confusing or uncomfortable for you here. <p>Do not worry about artistic skills. This is not about making a beautiful drawing — it is about expressing your experience. You will not be asked to explain your drawing unless you wish to. The drawings will help us start a conversation about our experiences, our feelings, and how we support each other.</p> <p>After the drawing activity, the following questions invite you to reflect more deeply on your experiences and feelings. You can read them by yourself, or the instructor may read them aloud to start a group conversation.</p> <p>What is reflection in your opinion? What is the difference between observation and reflection? Do you think that reflection played a significant role in your journey experience and during the period you settled in Italy? In short, does reflection help you to process (digest) the experiences or on the other hand you think that doing/action is more important than thinking/reflecting? When/where do you usually reflect? Do you write your reflections or you just keep them in your head/heart and share with your peers? Or do you use other means of expression (drawings, social network, etc.)? What role does sharing with people play? Do you think it contributes to your wellbeing? Is it easier to share with other refugees or do you have the occasion to share with locals?</p> <p><u>Inputs for reflection:</u></p>	<p>Week 1</p> <p>The course objectives, class structure and organisation, and the understanding of reflection as a tool for processing experiences are central elements in supporting participants during the challenging process of integration into a new world, society, and cultural environment. Within this framework, service-learning is understood not merely as volunteer activity but, following the definition proposed by Andrew Furco, as a pedagogical approach that intentionally integrates community service with academic learning and structured reflection, fostering participants’ development as active and responsible citizens while deepening both civic engagement and intercultural understanding.</p> <p>As Furco explains, service-learning differs from other forms of experiential education because it intentionally seeks to benefit both the provider and the recipient of the service while maintaining an equal focus on service and learning:</p> <p>“Service-learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. To do this, service-learning programs must have some academic context and be designed in such a way that ensures that both the service enhances the learning and the learning enhances the service. [...] It is this balance that distinguishes service-learning from all other experiential education programs.” (Furco, 1996, p. 5)</p> <p>The session opens with a short visual icebreaker designed to create a safe and reflective atmosphere from the beginning. Participants are invited to draw two simple images: one representing the most welcoming, beautiful, or comforting thing they have experienced in Siena so far, and one</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (Director). (2022, March 25). <i>The reality of a refugee</i> [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kC7CIfkTOdI 	<p>representing something they have found difficult, confusing, or challenging. Artistic skills are not important; the aim is expression, not aesthetics.</p> <p>After completing the drawings, participants hand them to the facilitator, who displays them anonymously and guides a gentle group discussion. The facilitator helps participants recognise shared emotions, identify sources of support, and reframe difficulties as part of a learning journey. The discussion should be conducted with sensitivity and humour when appropriate, helping to reduce tension and build trust within the group.</p> <p>This activity serves as a bridge between lived experience and reflective practice, preparing participants to engage in the questions on observation, reflection, and personal processing that follow.</p>
<p>Week 2</p> <p><u>The arrival in Italy (Siena).</u></p> <p>Try to briefly reflect on the first challenges you encountered when you arrived in Siena after an exhausting trip. How was the first encounter with the locals? Were they friendly and welcoming and/or suspicious and prejudiced? How did you feel at the arrival in this new environment? What were your first impressions?</p> <p><u>Inputs for reflection:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adichie, C. N. (2013). <i>Americanah</i>. Alfred A. Knopf. → Recommended reading: Part I, chapters 1-7 (arrival, first impressions, identity negotiation). • Matar, H. (2019). <i>A Month in Siena</i>. Random House. • Tan, S. (2006). <i>The Arrival</i>. Arthur A. Levine Books. • <i>Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story</i> (C. N. Adichie, Narr.). (2009). [Video recording]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg 	<p>Week 2</p> <p>The goal of this week is to experiment journaling in class. Instructors start from the very basic activity of distributing notebooks and pens. Asylum seekers and refugees are invited to try to write a reflective entry on the proposed topic. Once they are done with writing, they are invited to share their reflections with peers.</p> <p>The objective of this activity is to stimulate their reflective attitude and help them to distinguish between observation and reflection. If among the refugee group there are people who don't have the necessary literacy skills to write an entry, it is recommended to discuss the question orally and, where possible, a linguistic mediator should be present. Refugees' digital literacy skills should also be used to enhance reflection that can also happen through social media, pictures, videos etc.</p> <p><u>Some context regarding the inputs for reflection:</u></p> <p>Shaun Tan's <i>The Arrival</i> (2006) is particularly suitable as a preparatory reading for reflection on the experience of arrival and early integration. Through its wordless narrative, the graphic novel allows participants with different linguistic levels to engage equally with the emotional and social dimensions of migration, including disorientation, first encounters with</p>

the host community, and the gradual construction of belonging. Its visual storytelling facilitates discussion, empathy, and intercultural dialogue, making it especially effective in contexts where literacy levels and language proficiency may vary.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk *The Danger of a Single Story* (2009) offers an accessible and powerful entry point for reflecting on first encounters between newcomers and host communities. The talk helps participants recognise how stereotypes, expectations, and limited narratives can shape both the way refugees are perceived and how they themselves interpret the new social environment. By encouraging critical awareness of these "single stories," the text supports the development of perspective-taking, empathy, and intercultural sensitivity. It is therefore particularly effective as a preparatory activity for reflective prompts on arrival experiences, first impressions, and relationships with local communities.

Selected chapters from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah* (2013) provide a powerful literary perspective on the experience of migration, first encounters with a new society, and the negotiation of identity in a different cultural context. The protagonist's reflections on language, race, belonging, and social perception offer accessible entry points for discussing stereotypes, visibility, and adaptation. The recommended chapters can support early reflective activities on arrival experiences, helping participants begin to recall and share personal memories in a structured and supportive way.

Hisham Matar's *A Month in Siena* (2019) offers a reflective and accessible literary meditation on the city of Siena, its artistic heritage, and the relationship between place, memory, and personal healing. Through his encounter with Siennese painting and urban space, the author explores how beauty, silence, and attentive observation can support processes of reflection and emotional reconstruction. The text can therefore be used to invite participants to reflect on how physical environments, cultural heritage, and everyday surroundings influence their sense of belonging, perception of the host society, and personal journeys of adaptation.

Week 3

This week activity will be based on two documents published by Council of Europe: the *Education Pack: All Different – All Equal*, and the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE)*.

Choose an intercultural encounter or situation that caused you strong emotions. Use the following guiding questions to write your entry or to report orally:

What do you think of the activity?

Was it hard to remember and describe an intercultural encounter?

In what way did the guiding questions help you think about aspects you did not consider before?

Are the encounters presented by the other participants surprising in any way? Why?

Has your perception of a particular group changed because of the encounter or since the encounter?

If so, how?

In what way does this activity help you think about how stereotypes function?

In what way has it helped you think about your own behaviour in an intercultural situation?

Have the encounters presented by the others stimulated further reflection on your own intercultural encounters? How?

Inputs for reflection:

- Brander, P., Cardenas, C., De Vicente Abad, J., Gomes, R., & Taylor, M. (2016). *Education Pack: All Different – All Equal. Ideas, resources, methods and activities for non-formal intercultural education with young people and adults*. Council of Europe.
<https://rm.coe.int/1680700aac>
- Byram, M., Barrett, M., Ipgrave, J., Jackson, R., & Méndez García, M. del C. (2022). *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*. Council of Europe Publishing.
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/autobiography-of-intercultural-encounters>

Week 3

This week builds on the experiential dimension introduced in previous sessions and deepens the reflective process by focusing explicitly on intercultural encounters as transformative learning moments.

Drawing on the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE)* developed by the Council of Europe, the activity invites participants to move beyond a descriptive account of diversity and engage in a structured reflection on how meaning is constructed during intercultural interaction.

Within the EUFICCS approach, the encounter is not treated as an isolated event, but as a relational space in which emotions, perceptions, stereotypes, and power dynamics interact. Reflection therefore becomes a tool to unpack these dimensions and gradually transform lived experience into intercultural awareness.

Particular attention is given to the role of stereotypes — both those that participants may hold about others and those that may be projected onto them — and to the emotional components that shape interpretation.

This week thus represents a crucial step in the development of reflective democratic competence: participants learn to observe their own reactions, question initial assumptions, and recognise the complexity embedded in every intercultural situation.

Week 4

This week combines a guided visit, historical exploration, and personal reflection to explore how traditions of care, religion, and mutual aid have shaped civic life in Siena and continue to influence contemporary ideas of community and belonging.

During our visit to the Museum of Santa Maria della Scala, we saw how this institution historically welcomed pilgrims, the sick, and people in need. What struck you most during the visit? Did anything change the way you perceive Siena or its history?

Santa Maria della Scala cared for people who were often unknown to the city. Why do you think communities invest resources in helping strangers? Can you think of similar values or practices in your culture of origin?

During the visit, we also reflected on how both civic responsibility and religious values inspired this tradition of care. Many cultures and religions teach the importance of helping others and welcoming strangers. In your own life or tradition, what values or teachings encourage people to support those in need? Can you share a memory or example from your community?

After visiting Santa Maria della Scala and learning about the *contrade*, what connections do you see between historical forms of mutual aid and today's society? Are there places or groups today that play a similar role?

Think about a moment in your life when someone offered you help in a difficult situation. Did this experience influence your sense of trust, belonging, or community?

In Siena, the *contrade* are neighbourhood communities that historically supported their members in times of need. In your country or community, are there groups that help people in a similar way? Who helps when someone is in difficult situation, and how does this support influence people's sense of belonging?

Inputs for reflection:

- Drechsler, W. (2006). The Contrade, the Palio, and the Ben Comune: Lessons from Siena. *Trames. Journal of the Humanities*

Week 4

While the examples below refer specifically to the context of Siena, similar reflective and experiential activities could be developed in other European contexts, adapting them to the history and social fabric of each local community. The aim would remain comparable: connecting participants' lived experiences with the cultural and civic environment of the host society.

This week combines experiential learning, historical context, and reflective practice to help participants explore how traditions of care and solidarity have shaped Siena's civic culture. The visit to the Museum of Santa Maria della Scala provides a concrete entry point to discuss how medieval institutions of assistance functioned not only as places of medical care but as expressions of religious ethics, civic responsibility, and communal identity. Linking this experience to the history of the *contrade* allows participants to recognise how mutual aid has long been embedded in the social fabric of the city.

Some context regarding the inputs for reflection:

Drechsler (2006) explains how in Siena the *contrade* and the Palio reflect a broader civic philosophy centred on the *ben comune*. Instructors may use this text to highlight how local traditions can embody principles of collective responsibility and participation.

Silverman (1979) offers an anthropological perspective on the Palio of Siena as a social and symbolic system. Selected passages can help participants understand how rituals and traditions contribute to identity formation and social cohesion.

The Santa Maria della Scala Museum website provides accessible historical information on the hospital's role in welcoming pilgrims, the poor, and the sick. These texts are particularly useful for explaining how religious charity and civic organisation historically overlapped, making them suitable as introductory input for discussion.

Henderson (2006) situates institutions such as Santa Maria della Scala within the broader development of European hospitals. Instructors

<p><i>and Social Sciences</i>, 10(2), 99–125. https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2006.2.01</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henderson, J. (2006). <i>The Renaissance Hospital: Healing the Body and Healing the Soul</i>. Yale University Press. • Piccinni, G. (2013). Documents for a History of the Hospital of Santa Maria Della Scala in Siena. <i>SVMMA. Revista de Cultures Medievales</i>, (2), 139–166. https://doi.org/10.1344/Svmma2013.2.5 • Silverman, S. (1979). On the Uses of History in Anthropology: The Palio of Siena. <i>American Ethnologist</i>, 6(3), 413–436. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1979.6.3.02a00010 • Santa Maria della Scala Museum Website: https://www.santamariadellascalas.com/en → Read about the history and functions of the <i>Santa Maria della Scala</i> complex 	<p>may draw on short excerpts to show that medieval hospitals were not primarily medical institutions but centres of hospitality, assistance, and social care.</p> <p>Piccinni’s article presents a selection of historical documents related to the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, one of the oldest and most important institutions of care and hospitality in medieval Siena. The source can help participants understand how practices of welcoming strangers, pilgrims, and people in need were historically embedded in the civic culture of the city. Trainers may use selected excerpts or visual references to stimulate reflection on how communities organise solidarity and care, and how historical examples of hospitality can resonate with contemporary experiences of arrival, support, and integration.</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p>This week combines three complementary learning moments: the visit to the Allegory of Good Government as a visual representation of civic values, the encounter with the <i>Costituto</i> at the State Archives as a historical expression of shared rules, and the exploration of a <i>contrada</i> as a living example of community participation and belonging.</p> <p>In Siena, people often speak about the <i>ben comune</i> (common good) and about their sense of belonging to the city. These aspects are strongly linked to the attitudes of civic-mindedness and responsibility, shown in the RFCDC butterfly. Bearing this in mind, think about your own experience and answer the following questions in the way you prefer(writing, talking, or drawing):</p> <p>Have you observed any examples of the local perception of community? How do locals participate in the community? Is it different from how you would participate in your community? What levels of community have you observed here? How do locals express a sense of belonging to the community?</p>	<p>Week 5</p> <p>While the examples below refer specifically to the context of Siena, similar activities could be developed in other European contexts, adapting them to the civic history and institutional culture of each local community. The aim would remain comparable: encouraging reflection on civic responsibility, participation, and the relationship between individuals and the governance of the societies in which they live.</p> <p>The city of Siena offers a historically significant example of how civic responsibility has been understood as a shared duty between institutions and citizens. In the fourteenth century, the Sienese Republic commissioned a cycle of paintings in its town hall to represent the effects of good and bad government on society. These images conveyed a clear message: the well-being of a community depends not only on rulers, but also on the behaviour and responsibility of its inhabitants.</p> <p>In the Sienese tradition, the common good (<i>ben comune</i>) was understood as the foundation of civic life. Social harmony, economic prosperity, and peaceful coexistence were seen</p>

What is the “glue” of the local community?
 What contributions can you, as an asylum seeker, make to the community?
 Do you feel that you are able to participate in the local community?
 What new ways have you found to participate and contribute to the community?
 How can a strong sense of belonging to the community influence service?
 Do you feel any responsibility to the society in which you live? Or wherever you are?
 Do you feel the same responsibilities in Italy as you do at home?
 Where do you feel the burden of social/civic responsibilities to be stronger?
 Does local culture influence your attitude and behaviour towards social responsibilities? (Give examples).

Inputs for reflection:

- Bowsky, W. M. (1981). *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena under the Nine, 1287–1355*. University of California Press.
- Smarthistory. (2013, January 14). *Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Palazzo Pubblico frescos: Allegory and effect of good and bad government* (B. Harris & S. Zucker, Narrs) [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jk3wNadYA7k>

as the results of justice, cooperation, and mutual care within the community. This perspective resonates with contemporary approaches to democratic culture and civic education. In line with the Council of Europe’s Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), civic-mindedness and responsibility are understood as competences that emerge through participation, reflection, and engagement in community life.

For refugees, this historical example provides an opportunity to reflect on their own role within the host society. Regardless of origin or migration background, individuals contribute to the strength of a community through everyday actions such as cooperation, respect for others, and participation. In this sense, good government is not only an institutional condition but also a collective achievement shaped by the responsibility of all members of society.

To support this reflection, the week combines three complementary learning experiences that illustrate how civic responsibility is constructed and lived. The visit to the *Allegory of Good and Bad Government* introduces civic values through visual representation and symbolic language. The encounter with the *Costituto* at the State Archives provides insight into how communities translate shared principles into formal rules and institutional frameworks. Finally, the exploration of a *contrada* offers a living example of how belonging, participation, and mutual care are practiced in everyday community life.

This triangulation between symbol, rule, and lived community experience allows participants to understand civic responsibility not only as an abstract principle, but as a relationship between values, institutions, and social practices. By engaging with these three dimensions, participants are invited to recognize that communities are shaped not only by laws or leaders, but also by the active contribution of their members.

The *Costituto di Siena* as a historical model of civic-mindedness

The historical example of the *Costituto di Siena* offers a meaningful entry point for

	<p>reflecting on civic-mindedness as a lived and historically embedded practice. Far from being merely a legal document, the <i>Costituto</i> represented a collective commitment to the regulation of public life, the protection of the common good, and the shared responsibility of citizens in maintaining social harmony.</p> <p>By engaging with this historical source, participants are invited to recognize that civic responsibility is not an abstract modern concept, but a long-standing cultural construction shaped through negotiated rules, communal values, and systems of mutual accountability. The <i>Costituto</i> thus becomes a powerful pedagogical tool to illustrate how communities articulate norms, define rights and duties, and translate shared values into institutional frameworks.</p> <p>In the context of intercultural education, reflecting on the <i>Costituto di Siena</i> encourages participants to compare different traditions of community governance, fostering awareness that societies develop mechanisms to regulate coexistence, balance individual and collective interests, and promote social cohesion. This comparative perspective supports the development of civic-mindedness as understood within the RFCDC framework: a disposition grounded in responsibility, participation, respect for shared norms, and commitment to the well-being of the broader community.</p>
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Week 6

This week's reflection invites you to think about family roles, relationships, and social expectations in different societies. You may answer by writing, drawing, or discussing with others. In every society, families play an important role, but they are organised in different ways.

In your family, what roles do men and women usually have? Who makes important decisions? Do these roles feel natural to you, or have you ever questioned them? Looking back, how did your family influence your ideas about relationships and responsibilities?

Living in a new country often brings new perspectives. Have you noticed differences between gender roles here and in your home country? What surprised you most? What feels easy to understand, and what feels more difficult? Do you think people change their ideas about gender or relationships when they move to another country? Have your own views changed in any way?

What does a respectful relationship between men and women mean to you? What values are important in relationships in your culture? Which values do you think are important everywhere? Can people respect their own culture and also accept new ideas? What helps people find balance between tradition and change?

In your culture of origin, how do people usually choose a partner? Is marriage based more on personal choice, family involvement, or a mix of both? What expectations exist about dating, engagement, or living together? What responsibilities are traditionally associated with being a husband or a wife? Have your ideas about marriage or partnership changed since living here?

In your culture, how are separation and divorce viewed? Which relationships are socially accepted, and which are discouraged? How are LGBTQ+ people generally perceived in your society of origin? Do you think attitudes are changing? How does this compare with what you observe here?

Finally, think about your own perspective. What does a good relationship mean to you personally? Which elements matter most: love, stability,

Week 6

This activity explores gender and family roles, relationships, and social expectations across cultures.

These themes can be sensitive, as they relate to personal beliefs, religion, family honour, and identity. As a facilitator, please keep in mind that your role is to create a safe space where different perspectives can be expressed respectfully. It may be important to remind participants that the aim is reflection, not agreement. Participants should feel free to speak, remain silent, or express uncertainty. Facilitators should avoid framing European norms as "correct" or "advanced", and instead encourage comparison, curiosity, and personal reflection. This week's activities provide an experiential approach to becoming aware of one's own *framework* (or frameworks) of *values* and prompt participants to reflect on different and maybe conflicting frameworks. In week 9 the importance of being aware of yours and others' frameworks of value will be approached from a more theoretical perspective.

Some context regarding the inputs for reflection:

The text *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi is particularly useful because it presents gender expectations through a personal story rather than through abstract theory. It allows participants to discuss social norms, family influence, and individual freedom without feeling directly judged. When introducing the text, remind participants that the story represents one person's life in a particular time and place. It is not meant to describe an entire culture, but to help us reflect on how social expectations can shape people's choices and opportunities. Invite participants to approach the story with curiosity rather than judgement. The aim is not to decide what is right or wrong, but to explore how individuals navigate family expectations, social rules, and personal aspirations. You may encourage discussion by asking what kinds of pressures the main character experiences from family, society, or institutions, and whether participants recognise similar expectations in their own lives or communities. This can open a space for comparison without forcing anyone to speak about personal experiences. Some participants

respect, family approval, religion, independence, or something else? Do you think migration can change how people understand love, partnership, or family? What helps people maintain a balance between their cultural identity and new social realities?

Inputs for reflection:

- Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Polity Press. → Sociological reflection on relationships, identity, and changing social norms in contemporary societies.
- Satrapi, M. (2003). *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Pantheon Books. → Graphic memoir exploring gender, family, and social expectations across cultures and political contexts.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (Director). (2024, December 16). *Through Our Eyes: Young Migrant Women's Experiences in the EU* [Video recording].
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNPdEDnGN4Q>

may connect emotionally with themes such as control, honour, responsibility, or restriction. If this happens, acknowledge their reactions respectfully and allow space for reflection, without asking for personal details. Listening can be as meaningful as speaking. The goal of the activity is to foster mutual understanding and reflection on how people balance belonging, expectations, and personal choices in different social contexts

The reading *Liquid Love* by Baumann introduces the idea that relationships in contemporary societies are often shaped by mobility, uncertainty, and changing expectations. For participants coming from more family-centred contexts, these perspectives may feel unfamiliar or even uncomfortable. It can be helpful to frame the text as an invitation to reflect on social change, rather than as a model to follow.

When presenting the text, remind participants that Bauman is observing patterns in modern societies, not suggesting how relationships should be lived. His reflections can be used as a starting point to explore how different societies understand commitment, stability, and responsibility.

You may invite participants to consider whether they recognise situations where relationships today feel more flexible or uncertain, either in their own lives or in the societies around them. Encourage them to reflect on what gives relationships a sense of security in their experience, and how this may come from family bonds, personal choice, shared values, or community support.

The discussion can also explore how people navigate the space between continuity and change. Some may value strong family involvement, others personal independence, and many experience a combination of both. The aim is not to compare models or rank cultures, but to understand how people seek stability, trust, and belonging in different contexts.

Week 7

This week focuses on the experience of encountering cultural and social differences during the journey and within the host community. The reflection aims to support participants in recognising diversity, developing openness and respect, and considering how different people can live together despite differences.

Experiencing Difference

What felt different when you first arrived in Italy or Europe? During your journey, what differences did you notice between countries or communities? Which differences were easy to accept? Which were difficult? Did any differences change the way you see your own culture or habits?

Responding to Difference

How do people react when they meet something unfamiliar?
Can you describe a situation where you observed openness or closedness?
Have you ever felt like an outsider? What made the situation easier or harder?
In your service activities, have you experienced moments of misunderstanding linked to differences?

Understanding Diversity

In Europe, people often use the word diversity to talk about differences between people, cultures, beliefs, and ways of living. Based on your experience, what could this word mean to you? Do you think differences between people can be positive? When?
Can differences also create tension or fear? Why?
What helps people live together despite differences?

Respect Across Cultures

What does respect look like in this country?
What behaviours are considered respectful here?
Are there behaviours that are normal in your home country but may be misunderstood here?
Do you think visitors, locals, or both share responsibility for adapting to rules and social norms?
Can you share an episode from your service experience that relates to respect or disrespect?

Input for reflection:

Week 7

This week invites participants to reflect on how they experience differences in everyday life and service activities, and how openness and respect can support positive intercultural encounters. Rather than starting from abstract concepts, the reflection begins with lived experience and gradually moves toward broader understanding. In this week, no suggested readings are intentionally provided. The aim is to allow participants to approach the themes of difference, openness, diversity, and respect starting from their own lived experiences rather than from predefined conceptual frameworks. Many participants have already encountered significant cultural differences during their journeys and settlement processes. Beginning from these personal observations allows reflection to emerge in a more authentic and meaningful way. Introducing theoretical texts at this stage might unintentionally impose external interpretations before participants have had the opportunity to articulate their own.

Bennett's work on intercultural sensitivity offers a useful framework for understanding how people experience and interpret cultural differences. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) describes a progression from ethnocentric perspectives, where one's own culture is experienced as central, to more ethnorelative perspectives that recognise and value cultural differences. Trainers may use selected excerpts or simplified explanations of the model to help participants reflect on their own reactions when encountering unfamiliar cultural practices or beliefs. The framework can support discussion about how openness, curiosity, and empathy can gradually develop through intercultural experiences and interactions with others.

The RICA model (Reflective Intercultural Competence Assessment), developed by Biagi and Bracci, offers a framework for understanding how intercultural competences can emerge through reflective engagement with lived experiences. Rather than presenting intercultural competence as a fixed set of skills to be acquired, the model emphasises reflection as a key process through which individuals become aware of their reactions to cultural differences, question their assumptions, and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bennett, M. (2017). Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. In Y. Y. Kim (Ed.), <i>The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication</i>. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0182 • Biagi, F., & Bracci, L. (2020). <i>Reflective Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture and Engaged Citizens</i>. Cambridge Scholar Publishing. → Recommended reading: Chapter 4 - The RICA Model: Assessment of Reflective Intercultural Competence 	<p>gradually develop openness, empathy, and intercultural understanding.</p> <p>In the context of this syllabus, the RICA model can help trainers guide participants in reflecting on their own experiences of encountering cultural differences during their journey and in their everyday interactions within the host community. Through reflection on emotions, perceptions, and behaviours, participants can become more aware of how their experiences contribute to the development of intercultural competences and democratic attitudes. Trainers may use simplified explanations of the model to encourage participants to reflect on how they react when facing unfamiliar practices, beliefs, or social norms, and how these experiences may foster greater openness and mutual understanding.</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p>This week invites participants to reflect on the relationship between service, personal values, and spiritual or ethical motivations. The questions encourage participants to consider how faith, beliefs, or inner convictions may influence their sense of responsibility, solidarity, and commitment to helping others within the community.</p> <p>To what extent do you perceive helping others as a moral responsibility or as a duty connected to your faith? When you volunteer do you experience your action as an expression of values such as solidarity, justice or compassion? Since the beginning of this experience has your understanding of faith or spirituality changed in any way? Have you noticed differences between how religion is lived and expressed here compared to your home country and how do these differences affect you? Do you feel that engaging in service strengthens your sense of belonging to a community to humanity or to something greater than yourself? In your view can service have a spiritual dimension even for someone who does not identify as religious? How does reflecting on your inner motivations help you better understand your role and responsibility within the community?</p> <p><u>Inputs for reflection:</u></p>	<p>Week 8</p> <p>In this week, participants are invited to reflect on the spiritual and moral dimensions of service.</p> <p>Within the “Grass and Roots” experience, service has often emerged not only as a social action, but as a form of responsibility deeply connected to personal faith, ethical values, and inner motivation.</p> <p>This session creates a safe space to explore how religion, spirituality, or personal belief systems may influence one’s understanding of helping others, responsibility, and community engagement.</p> <p>The aim is not theological discussion, but reflective awareness: how does faith (or the absence of it) shape civic action?</p> <p>Furthermore, Week 8 represents the only moment in the syllabus in which participants are explicitly invited to bring their own materials into the learning space.</p> <p>This choice is deliberate. While the overall structure of the syllabus follows a guided reflective progression, this session introduces a small but meaningful element of co-creation. “Grass and Roots” volunteers are invited to contribute short references (for example Qur’anic verses, sayings, personal narratives, or other sources of inspiration) that help them</p>

<p>This week, there are no materials recommended by the instructor.</p> <p>However, if you wish, you may bring a short reference that inspires your understanding of service. This could be a verse from the Qur'an, a <i>hadith</i>, a proverb, a personal story, or any other material or example that allows you to explain what helping others means to you.</p> <p>You are invited to briefly explain why this reference is meaningful for you and how it relates to your experience as a volunteer in the "Grass and Roots" group.</p>	<p>articulate the spiritual or moral foundations of their engagement in service.</p> <p>The pedagogical rationale behind this decision is twofold. First, it recognises participants not only as learners, but as knowledge holders. Secondly, it creates a structured opportunity for agency within the educational process, allowing volunteers to become co-authors of the reflective space.</p> <p>This moment of co-creation should be carefully facilitated. The aim is not theological instruction nor religious persuasion, but reflective dialogue. Participants are encouraged to present their reference as a personal source of meaning, opening space for mutual understanding and critical reflection.</p> <p>By temporarily shifting from instructor-provided material to participant-generated inputs, Week 8 embodies the transition from participation to social acting that characterises the broader EUFICCS pedagogical approach.</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p>This week invites participants to reflect on how they see themselves in relation to others and to the wider world after moving to a new country. The reflection explores ideas such as global citizenship, empathy, and the importance of social relationships in supporting processes of integration and cultural mediation.</p> <p><u>Global Citizenship and Belonging</u> You may hear people saying that they see themselves as "global citizens". A possible way to think of global citizenship is to feel a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity.</p> <p>What communities or geographical locations do you feel belonging to? Do you ever feel conflicted because the values and norms of two or more groups you feel connected with are very different? How do you deal with such conflicting feelings?</p> <p><u>Empathy and Cultural Mediation</u> This activity invites you to reflect on what empathy is and how empathy works in cultural mediation.</p>	<p>Week 9</p> <p>This week focuses on the role of the cultural mediator and introduces some basic psychological perspectives that can support participants in their activities of assisting newly arrived individuals.</p> <p>Facilitators are encouraged to approach each participant as a global (or world) citizen and to invite them to perceive others in the same way. They can invite participants to reflect on their sense of affiliation and belonging: do participants feel belonging to one or more communities or geographical locations? What cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions are attached to such senses of belonging? Do they experience any conflict? Facilitators may also refer back to Week 7, when experiences of encountering differences were explored.</p> <p>Facilitators may find it useful to consult materials on Global Citizenship Education developed by UNESCO when preparing this discussion.</p> <p>Emphasising a sense of belonging to a common humanity is central to one of the fundamental</p>

<p>Reflect on these two words: sympathy and empathy. What do they mean according to you? Are there differences between being sympathetic and being empathic with another person? How can this difference appear in practice when meeting someone from a different background? How can feeling sympathy and/or empathy help you support newly arrived individuals in your role as a cultural mediator?</p> <p>Watch the YouTube video “The Importance of Empathy”: What suggestions from the video could you apply in your work as a mediator? What might be challenging to apply?</p> <p>Reflect further: how can you feel empathy with someone who behaves or thinks in ways that you perceive as morally wrong?</p> <p><u>Reflecting on the Role of the Mediator</u> You may already have acted as a mediator when helping a newly arrived person find their way in the community where you live. Think about your experiences with newcomers: What do you think you did well? What did you find challenging? What did the person you were helping find difficult?</p> <p><u>Mapping Social Networks</u> Look at the example of a map of a person’s social network and consider the networks you built during your life that helped you become part of a social group. To better understand the different systems, you can watch this short YouTube video “Ecological Systems Theory”. Create a map of the social network you had before coming to this country.</p>	<p>principles of cultural mediation: adopting a ‘whole person-centred’ humanistic approach. Mediators can support their clients by recognising the complexity of their human experience and by responding with empathy (experiencing someone else’s feelings, often through similar experiences) rather than sympathy (recognising another person’s suffering and circumstances).</p> <p>At this stage, facilitators can support reflections on frameworks of values: how they are formed and how they shape one’s perception of the world and of others. To understand another person’s framework, mediators may adopt an ethnographic attitude, collecting as much information as possible about the people they aim to support in order to better understand their needs and feelings.</p> <p>The discussion may then move to different types of social support that mediators may provide: informational, emotional, tangible, affirmational, and belonging support. This can be illustrated by introducing Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which presents different dimensions of human needs: basic physiological and safety needs, psychological needs such as belonging and esteem, and self-fulfilment needs (self-actualisation).</p> <p>This reflection can be further supported by discussing the ecological systems perspective, which highlights the social networks that human beings build from birth and that anchor them in communities. When people migrate, these networks are often disrupted and must gradually be rebuilt in new social environments.</p>
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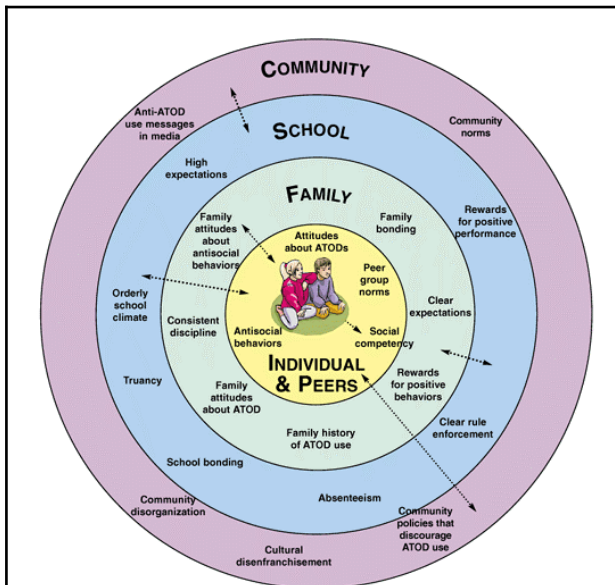


Figure 3 - Ecological model. Alyla.k., CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

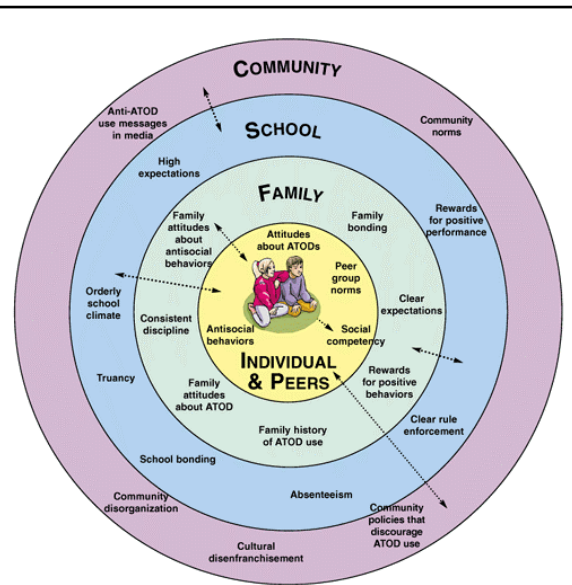


Figure 3 - Ecological model. Alyla.k., CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

When you left your place and your community, that social network changed and you had to start building new connections.

Map the social network you have begun to build in this country after your arrival. Remember that you may still have connections with people and resources in your country of origin. You may include these links if they still support you.

Compare the two maps:

Are there elements missing in your current network?

What could help you fill these gaps?

Visualising social networks in this way can also be useful when working with others. Mediators can use this tool with newly arrived individuals to reflect together on possible paths of integration and on the resources available within the community.

Co-creating Principles for Mediation

Work together with another participant or in a small group. Share your experiences and identify some principles or guidelines that you think are important for mediation work.

Finally, together with the whole group, create a shared list of guidelines and compare them with the overview provided by the training facilitators.

Through reflecting on empathy, belonging, and social connections, participants are encouraged to recognise how personal experiences and

Once these sets of needs have been presented and discussed, the training can focus on co-creating guidelines for sensitive and human-centred cultural mediation work.

Participants can first reflect on their own experiences in helping newly arrived individuals: what worked well, what was challenging, and what they learned from these experiences. They can then derive guidelines that can later be compared with principles discussed in the literature.

Possible guidelines may include:

- Showing unconditional respect
- Approaching persons assisted as whole persons, considering the complexity of their needs
- Building trust and communicating support (“you are valuable, and I am with you”)
- Helping persons assisted rebuild self-respect and self-confidence by recognising their strengths
- Informing persons assisted about their situation and relevant legal procedures
- Helping persons assisted meet their basic needs
- Discussing and co-constructing an acculturation or integration plan, recognising that this is a gradual process
- Supporting language development and communication needs
- Raising cultural awareness

<p>relationships can also contribute to building more inclusive and supportive communities.</p> <p><u>Inputs for reflection:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marjanović, M., & Harbutli, A. (2021). <i>Standards on Cultural Mediation in Protection</i>. Crisis Response and Policy Center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting persons assisted in rebuilding their social networks and systems of support • Helping persons assisted gradually become self-sufficient and independent.
<p>Week 10</p> <p>During this activity, we will look together at the RFCDC butterfly by the Council of Europe, which shows different competences that help people live together in diverse societies. These include values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding.</p> <p>Take a moment to look at the butterfly and think about your experience during this course.</p> <p>Do you feel that some parts of the butterfly became stronger for you? Did you notice changes in how you listen, communicate, cooperate, or understand others? Did you learn something about respect, responsibility, or living together in diversity? Was there an experience during the course that helped you grow in one of these areas?</p> <p>You do not need to answer all of these questions. You may choose one competence, one experience, or one idea that feels important to you.</p> <p>You may write, draw, or share orally.</p>	<p>Week 10</p> <p>Before starting the activity, briefly introduce the RFCDC butterfly to the class. Explain that it represents different competences that help people live together in diverse societies, including values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding. You do not need to explain all competences in detail, but it is helpful to give a short overview so participants understand that learning can happen in many ways, not only through study but also through encounters, service, and reflection.</p> <p>Invite participants to look at the butterfly and think about their own journey during the course. Encourage them to choose one or two competences they feel connected to, rather than trying to reflect on everything.</p>

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