



# Continuing Education for Trainers

## Developing an International Peer to Peer Process

**A Strategic Partnership for Exchange of Good Practice (2020-2023)**

**Methodical-Didactic Lab III: Instructional Design Principles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
(Kassel, Germany, April 26-29, 2023)**

## The Future of the International Network for Professional Education and Training – Strategic Directions and Agreements

### Background and goals

The Strategic Partnership for the Exchange of Good Practice ‘Continuing Education for Trainers – Developing an International Peer-to-Peer Process’ (Peer2Peer-CET) was carried out by eleven European training centers from network of the International Training Circle of the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development, with the support of the German Anthropoi Bundesverband as Coordinating Partner. The Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development and organizations from Argentina, Lebanon, Russia, and the USA accompanied the project as Associated Partners. The project was co-funded by a grant from the ERASMUS+ Program of the European Union.

The project ran from September 2020 through August 2023 and included three ‘Methodical-Didactic Labs’ – transnational peer-to-peer learning activities – during which instructors from anthroposophic professional education centers and initiatives in the field of inclusive social development exchanged, reflected on and developed further methodical-didactic principles, approaches and practices that build on the previous work of the International Training Circle of more than two decades, integrate contemporary and future-oriented insights on transformative adult learning, and are responsive to the evolving conditions and needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – especially as related to the much discussed intensification of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity in all spheres of individual and social life.

The conditions of the global pandemic that began shortly after submission of the ERASMUS+ grant application and only resolved itself towards the end of the project cycle posed significant practical challenges, but also underscored the critical importance of the goals originally formulated:

*The goal is to give experienced and new VET educators, as well as VET organizations in the network opportunities to evolve their practices and instructional designs towards open, dynamic, and transformative learning environments and communities that meet the needs of professionals in the disabilities field as lifelong learners in a dynamic, diverse, globally*

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*interconnected and increasingly unpredictable 21st century environment.  
(From the ERASMUS+ Project Proposal)*

In terms of concrete objectives, the intention of the Strategic Partnership was to enhance the established forms of professional exchange in the network of anthroposophic professional education centers, in the sense of a globally connected peer-to-peer ecosystem for individual and organizational learning and development:

*The project will be prototyping a Peer-to-Peer Training and Continuing Education Process which can be continued after the end of the project and be replicated in adapted forms on regional and organizational levels. It will also provide the initial content for an open digital platform for the exchange of good practices, which will be further developed by the participating network of organizations and be made available to the general public after the conclusion of the project, thus providing a supportive infrastructure for ongoing Peer-to-Peer Continuing Education for Trainers. (From the ERASMUS+ Project Proposal)*

The project website (<https://peer2peer-cet.edu>) makes available the content that was created throughout the process, and especially in the three Methodical-Didactic Labs. This includes summaries of input from participants, which led to two prior publications in the journal *Anthroposophic Perspectives in Inclusive Social Development*.

### Interim results

The first summary of project results was published following Methodical-Didactic Lab I, which took place in an online format, as a result of the global pandemic. The article, *Methodical-Didactic Approaches in Professional Education for Inclusive Social Development* (Göschel 2022), gave an overview of current practices, questions, and intentions for further development in the network. Reflective input from participants in the project, highlighted the importance of the following methodical-didactic elements, which were already well established in many contexts, and which participants wanted to refine further:

- structured, question-led group work and dialogical processes,
- the 'Trinal Method', integrating theory, art, and practice,
- self-development and biographical work, and
- phenomenological methods.

When asked about their new learning, participants mentioned:

- their steep learning curve with remote teaching, forced by the pandemic,
- their striving to build learning spaces as containers for collaborative inquiry,
- the attempt to balance form and freedom in the design of learning processes,
- the search for new ways to use students' professional practice more effectively as a field of learning,
- experimentation with methods of deepening the understanding of the human being, including through the arts and contemplative practice, and
- the relatively new field of inclusive learning formats, bringing together those who are learning to be support professionals in the disabilities field with persons with disabilities in a shared learning process.

These questions were taken further in Methodical-Didactic Lab II, leading to a second publication, titled *Network Development in Professional Education for Inclusive Social Development* (Göschel 2023). The insights presented in this paper were again distilled from input gathered from project participants during and after this second Lab, which took place as a hybrid event. Participants characterized the peer-to-peer networking, professional exchange, and development work that they were prototyping in the Labs as:

- a process of building a living, global community,
- a model for building communities of learning, and
- a creative space, in which new ideas for teaching, for curriculum and instructional design, can emerge.

They also reflected from a methodical-didactic viewpoint on the challenges of digital and hybrid spaces, and the strength of personal encounter in opening spaces for learning and growth. In addition to themes for further exploration, participants identified design elements that they experienced as important in bringing about this quality of a 'living, global community of learning' among professional peers. These include (list quoted from Göschel 2023):

- Spaces to speak and listen to each other with interest, curiosity, and care.
- A rhythm that has a breathing quality between the different elements.
- The balanced and rhythmical combination of spaces for artistic and creative meeting, singing and movement, with lectures, spaces for conversation, and workshops.
- Addressing hand, heart, and head; doing, feeling, and thinking.
- Combining conceptual and methodical work, exchange of experience, and creation of creative output in the conference.
- Keeping presentations brief and giving enough space for discussion, exchange, and development of what has been presented in small groups and plenum.
- Separating online and in-person events, so that each can follow their own rhythm.
- Honestly recognizing what can be done effectively and what is not possible in online formats.
- Enough open spaces in the program for private arrangements and meetings.
- Space for networking and forming of partnerships between institutions – including space for organizations to present their methodical-didactic approaches and concepts to each other.

This article also already includes some emerging directions for strengthening the continuing work of the international network, which were picked up again in more concrete terms in Methodical-Didactic Lab III.

### [Results of Lab III: Strategic directions for the network](#)

Following the input arising from Lab II, Methodical-Didactic Lab III took place as in-person event, with an online follow-up conversation to include members of the network who had been unable to participate. In generative processes during Lab, the following key strategic directions for the further development of peer-to-peer professional exchange and development in the international network of professional education and training centers associated with the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development were crystallized.

### Building a network platform

In addition to the open-source public resources shared via the website of the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development (which include all project results and contents, see <https://peer2peer-cet.eu>), the development of an active networking and resource platform for the continued peer-to-peer collaboration in the transnational network of professional education organizations associated with the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development was agreed. This will include the current project partners and the wider global network. The platform will be built on Moodle and will include:

- individual professional profiles of, including areas of expertise and interest, to facilitate peer-to-peer communication, consultation and collaboration,
- access to shared curriculum materials and other resources for instructional design and development,
- network documents and materials, including those governing the organizational peer-review process within the network, and
- continuing education modules and micro-credentials developed and shared by partners and working groups in the network for instructors (training for trainers), practitioners in the field (continuing education), and students/trainees.

### Developing a shared reference framework

A commitment was also made to further develop the existing organizational peer-review process by creating a framework document through a collaborative transnational process, including shared principles, curriculum benchmarks, and criteria. This common framework for professional education in inclusive social development on an anthroposophic basis will be designed to balance the need for a shared frame of reference with the freedom to contextualize each program in relation to local needs, culture, and circumstances, as well as different professional focus areas and educational levels.

### Developing new partnership formats

A further strategic direction determined in Lab III is the encouragement, support, and development of new partnership formats within the network. Partners committed to the development of bi-lateral peer relationships between education and training organizations, as well as strengthened regional networking and projects conducted by smaller groups of organizations across national boundaries and continents (including transnational capacity-building partnerships). Such partnerships may have various focus themes for collaboration and may also include mobility activities for instructors and/or learners. While these will need to be carried by their respective partners, the network as a whole and its coordinating group will facilitate, support, and help make such partnership activities visible for shared learning.

### Developing continuing education and micro-credentials

Throughout the project, participants from different organizations shared the need, internationally, for low-threshold and accessible structured learning experiences for instructors, including practice-based instructors, mentors, and support professionals in the field. Others reported in their experimentation and exploration of such formats, including innovative synchronous and asynchronous digital and hybrid options. Therefore, another strategic direction for the network consists in the development of transnational continuing education modules and/or micro-credentials for instructors (training for trainers) and

learners, which can be offered collaboratively through the network platform or in other forms facilitated by the network.

### Ways of working

The Coordinating Group responsible for the Peer2Peer-CET project was mandated to carry these strategic directions further in its capacity as core group of the International Training Circle of the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Social Development. With this, the further steps now flow back into the larger transnational network, beyond the consortium of partners carrying the present project. To take on the coordinating function for the implementation of the next steps, this group will clarify the intentions of associated organizations and their commitments to actively participate in this ongoing work as members of the International Training Circle.

The Circle committed to continuing its practice of annual transnational in-person network conferences, which will take place in a different region each year, and will be supplemented by digital collaboration formats, as needed and appropriate, to include those who cannot attend a particular annual conference in the process and enable project work throughout the year.

Besides planning for the implementation of the four key strategic directions and organizing the ongoing collaborative processes (including the annual conference and the organizational peer review) of the network, the core group was tasked with identifying sources of co-funding for these activities, including the possibility of future ERASMUS+ grant applications.

### Further Use and Dissemination

This summary is presented here as a summary of outcomes and future strategic perspectives arising for the International Training Circle from the Strategic Partnership for the Exchange of Good Practice 'Continuing Education for Trainers – Developing an International Peer-to-Peer Process' (Peer2Peer-CET). It will be made available in the 'Results' section on the project website (<https://peer2peer-cet.eu>). It will also be published as a final report on the project in the professional journal Anthroposophic Perspectives in Inclusive Social Development.

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### Prior Project Reports

Göschel, J. (2022). Methodisch-didaktische Ansätze in der beruflichen Bildung für inklusive Sozialgestaltung. | Methodical-Didactic Approaches in Professional Education for Inclusive Social Development. *Perspectives, 2022-1*.

Göschel, J. (2023). Netzwerkentwicklung in der beruflichen Bildung für inklusive Sozialgestaltung | Network Development in Professional Education for Inclusive Social Development. *Perspectives, 2023-1*.