

### *Emmanuel's learning diary*

#### **Leonardo : Immigrant Business Plan Athens, Greece 30 March – 4 April 2011**

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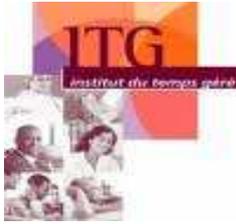
Our meeting has taken place in Athens at the end of March 2011. During this meeting, we had the chance to meet some local organizations, which main goal is to provide some migrants with some professional skills and some local job positions:

- the **Greek Council for Refugees in Athens**, and the service in charge of the support for job integration,
- a **local organization, dedicated for the support of migrants**, in order to permit them to be granted a job position in Greece after their arrival,
- a **local educational and vocational school for some adult people** with mental health difficulties and for some migrants.



All these organizations were very different in size, in history, in legal form and in management, but all of them have a strong motivation for improving the professional skills and welcoming conditions for the migrants, who have just arrived in Greece. It should be reminded that most of the migrants (more than 80%), who arrive in the UE, now came firstly in Greece, via Istanbul and Damas. They come from Africa, Middle-East and other Arabic countries. They are more and more young, alone and without support of their own families. Greece has to face this acute situation in an economical difficult situation (financial crisis and sovereign debt crisis). This situation tends to create some local political tensions in Greece due to the number of migrants who are still arriving in Greece.

But, even if the difficulties are high in order to finance the help for migrants in Greece, the local organizations are working hard in order to maintain some high welcoming conditions for migrants who are willing and motivated to get a job in Greece. The policy of these institutions is to **“keep the door opened”** to migrants even if it is difficult to face such a number of persons to be helped. This attitude is positive, but it has some repercussions for the organizations, which



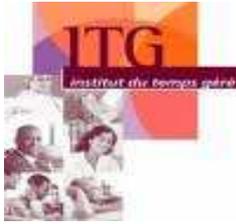
have to find some short-term solutions in order to maintain their level of activities without a constant flow of financing.

Among all the immigration aspects, we concentrated our discussions and visits about the **key factors of success** in job creation for a migrant. Concerning this aspect, the meeting in Athens was very positive during our discussions and exchange of experiences with local managers of the 3 organizations.

The following topics, which can be described as key points for the Trainers and the Trainees in this context, were particularly discussed between several meetings:

- the need for a strong support around the Trainers within the local framework : this support shall include a management team, a group of Trainers, some assistants ; this support shall also be funded by money and materials (IT investments for example, grants from national or international funds for some consultants presentations, local accommodations facilities...); as previously explained, in Greece, local organizations have to wait for a while to be granted the financing in time (sometimes the financing arrives more than one year after!!!) and the local organizations have to overcome this delay...which is not easy. How to teach some migrants and to welcome them, if the Teachers are not paid in time !
- the benefits from an effective integration in the local district of the local organizations ; Trainees and Trainers will take benefits from the training if the organization is also well locally integrated (with this integration process, more security, more exchange of experience and more local job opportunities can be provided); local integration is a key factor in order to help the migrants to get a job;
- the need for Teaching tools in order to facilitate the tasks of the Teachers ; among these tools, the following matters have been identified : local language, I&T skills, Business Plan comprehension ...; our partners have explained that all these tools can make the job “employability” more effective and more easy (not to limit a job in some seasonal jobs, but to get an effective on the long term);
- and what is for me the most important, the “human touch” in the process, especially essential for migrants with no family and no friends with them, and also for adults with mental health difficulties ; in order to develop this human way of Teaching, the organization of events (dinners, informal meetings during the week end...) ... always keep in mind that such organizations have to be “opened” to the Trainees and to think of the psychological development of the person.

All these topics seem the most important from my personal point of view.



During our visit in Athens, our process to get some information was to organize our meetings with some workshops with some Trainers and some interviews of Trainees. We visited the 3 local organizations during the opening hours (to become conscious of the reality) and we were granted the access to all the facilities and persons. After the meetings and the visits, we have made some debriefings on a regular way in order to identify some new information needed for the Program and to raise some questions to be discussed in further meetings.

We also have visited some shops and businesses, managed by some migrants in Athens, especially some African businesses and restaurants, created by migrants. These visits provide us with some examples – *at various stages of success* – of the capacity to create a business in Greece. We have seen some successful creations and some more difficult experiences, when the project has not yet lead to a success, at this stage. We hoped that they would be.

The debriefing between us also helped us to speak about our own feeling about the visits. It shall not be forgotten that, during the visits, we had to face the reality of some difficult aspects of immigration. For example, we have seen some migrants, who have just arrived in Greece and who were in the Greek Council for Refugees in Athens, in order to get some very urgent support (money, clothes, addresses...) and the Council was full of migrants, who were waiting for some urgent help. Facing such a reality is an “human experience”, which, I confess, is not so usual for persons like me, even if I have learnt a lot about some immigration aspects since the beginning of the project. What helped most was the support of other partners, of my Partner and of our friends in Athens, who were always with us.

All our visits and experience contributed to **the Immigrants Business Plan Guidelines**, which has been sent after the Meeting in Athens.

I would like to thank our Greek partners and organizations for all they have for us during our meeting in Athens.

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