

# Active citizenship through family learning

Recently I attended a five-day training seminar called FACE IT! hosted by the Clare Family Learning Project in the Adult Education Centre, Ennis, Clare County, Ireland. FACE IT! is a two-year European project funded through the Socrates programme and led by the EuroEd Foundation in Iasa (pronounced – ‘yash’) in Romania. With passion, professionalism and consistency EuroEd has gained the reputation of becoming one of the most active non-governmental, non-profit-making, educational institutions in north-eastern Romania. EuroEd’s mission is committed to making a positive contribution to the development of the Romanian civil society and promoting active European citizenship in Romania.

The European project FACE IT! offers training opportunities and materials for the provision of family learning programmes aiming to promote and develop active citizenship and participatory democracy. The Face IT! training package has been developed by experienced partners from: the UK, including the Clare County Family Learning Team in Ireland, DHE Solutions Ltd, based in Lancaster University, ContinYou and Campaign for Learning; Espace Pedagogie Formation, Marseille, France; Instituto Regionale Ricerca Educativa (IRRE), The Ligurian Regional Educational Research, Genoa, Italy; Teacher Training Centre, Ljubljana, Slovenia and the Teacher Training Centre, Iasa Romania. The event I attended in Ireland was the second of three similar events. The first was held in Slovenia in September and the third is to be held in Marseilles in January.

The project provides the opportunity for the pooling of experience and the expertise of various international organisations so that existing models of family learning or active citizenship can be adapted and developed to target the individual needs of audiences that extend across Europe. The training seminar included supporting the development of skills and combining professional knowledge of family learning with active citizenship and participatory democracy delivered through both formal and non-formal approaches. By so doing, practitioners are better able to meet the skills needs of targeted beneficiaries. The event was a programme developed for practitioners and community-based tutors working in a lead role in family learning within their organisation and there were representatives from all the countries involved in the project including the Clare County Family Learning team and six Romanian representatives.

As you can imagine, the event was a great opportunity of cross pollination of family learning expertise with similar expertise in active citizenship for all those involved and we all came away with more than just ‘seeds’ of ideas, but actual ‘almost-planned’ programmes that we can incorporate into our existing practice. So watch this space all you Share devotees – there will be some new additions being made to the Share programme in the very near future!

Although we all worked extremely hard starting at 8.45 every morning and not finishing until 6pm, we also had a great ‘craic’ as there were a considerable number of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of language and accents! I personally found the ‘Oirish’ accent the most difficult to understand! The Romanian, French, Slovenian and Italian delegates as usual, put all us UK delegates to shame with their multilingual skills. I even have a Family Learning Glossary with translations in French, Italian, Spanish and Romanian, plus the promise of some Share materials translated into Romanian.

The Irish contingency in Clare County were superb hosts: we were entertained every evening in true Irish hospitality with considerable consumption of Guinness, Caffreys and Irish Whiskeys; Colcannon with bacon and cabbage; and to round off the week we danced until the early hours of the morning at a Ceilidh –

hilarious when combined with all that food, alcohol and a strong influence of the national dances of Slovenia and Romania!

The outcomes from the three international events will be combined with outcomes from subsequent national training events and programmes and disseminated at an international conference in Iasi, Romania in June 2008 to which I have been invited. Here, representatives from regional, national and international fields will be able to showcase their own practice, discuss, agree and disseminate good practice in the delivery of active citizenship and participatory democracy through family learning and other informal adult learning approaches.



A truly international family of active citizens, including moi!

Gill Morris  
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