

REPORT ON TRAINING COURSE

4/05/2015, 9:00-12:30

Many attendees have been identified and involved by *Dialogos*, *Centro per la donna* and *Associazione San Lorenzo*, whose Chairman –Liliana Florei– accompanies one of her associates and comes to monitor the situation. She will probably do a new recall in the afternoon. Others have been given information from the Foreign Office and from the University.

The group is mainly composed of young women (there are only two men) and since the beginning it appears rather diversified due to:

- levels of education (the range of educational qualifications among the attendees go from secondary school diploma to postgraduate certifications);
- duration of their stay in the arrival context (from 7 months to 12 years);
- Italian language competence.

With the exception of two women who work as healthcare worker and as doctor assistant respectively, all the attendees are looking for either a job or for a more stable job. The 11 attendees attending the first lesson come from extremely different realities: among the women, there is one from China, one from Albania, two from Ukraine, and three from Rumania; men are from Cameroon, Rumania and Macedonia.

Introduction of the Di&Di project and of the Training Course (James Foschi, IECOB, University of Bologna; Francesca Crivellaro, Research Fellow in Cultural Anthropology, University of Bologna)

Introduction was particularly focused on the description of the course organization and contents. We told in advance that the first two frontal lectures –supervised by Carmelo Danisi and Roberto Rizza from University of Bologna- would deal with mostly “technical” contents, while the following lessons would be more like a workshop, aimed at encouraging a more active participation among all the attendees. Since local organizations involved in the course structuring phase had spread a previous version of the program, our introduction clarified the actual lesson calendar. At the end, we thought it was important to give everyone (attendees and tutors) the chance of introducing themselves.

Lesson on the European Union Law and on protective measures against discriminations in the working world (Carmelo Danisi, Lecturer on contract in International Law, University of Bologna)

After introducing himself and his lesson (aims and methods), Danisi discussed the following topics:

- International directives, agreements and treaties; Italian and European regulations;
- Protective measures and field of application;
- Factors which may foster discrimination (sex, ethnic origin, religion and personal beliefs, disability, age, sexual orientation);
- Discrimination types (direct, indirect);
- Discrimination cases and judgements.

Danisi circulated some materials placed at the attendees' disposal; he gave many examples and he always tried to involve the attendees by asking them frequent questions. Some of them had some knowledge about the topics discussed already (R., in particular). Nevertheless, participation was - after all - meaningful even from who was not particularly "qualified", but had good language knowledge.

To someone among the attendees, some "technical" concepts may have resulted not easily comprehensible, even though Danisi tried to use a simple language and to give as many examples as possible during his lesson. Some people, on the contrary, showed scant interest, but it was not easy to understand whether it was due to their lack of language competence (one of them had been in Italy for only 7 months), or to the type of the lesson, or to the topics discussed.

5/05/2015, 9:00-12:30

Compared to the first lesson, there was a drop in participation. This drop can be partially due to the fact that some of the attendees had been given - by privileged interlocutors (associations, institutions, etc.) - an outdated version of the program, in which the second lesson was scheduled on the 6th of May, instead of the 5th. Some of them even informed us they could not participate the day after).

Lesson: Employment Regulations and Policies in Italy from a comparative point of view (Roberto Rizza, Associate Professor in Economic Sociology – Economic and Work Processes, University of Bologna)

Roberto Rizza introduced himself, telling what his work is about and presenting the topics of his lesson. After asking the attendees to introduce themselves, Rizza discussed the following topics:

- “labour-market” definition;
- employment policies: institutions involved; difference between welfare and insurance support;
- public policies and labour market: regulation of the supply and demand meeting point; guaranteed income for the unemployed; methods to increase employment among particular categories of people;
- comparison between employment policies in Italy and in other OECD countries;
- employment/unemployment data and NEET in Italy and in other European countries;
- the effect of specific employment policies addressed to specific categories (women and young people).

In general, Rizza tried to use an easily comprehensible language, with frequent reformulations, to make sure the whole group would understand. He tried to involve the attendees asking them some questions. Some of them –R.C., P.C. and R.- demonstrated an active participation during the lesson.

14/05/2015, 9:00-12:30

Workshop: Ethnic and gender discrimination experiences in the labour market. Case studies and reflections (Federica Tarabusi, Researcher in Cultural Antropology, University of Bologna)

Federica Tarabusi introduced herself and the aim of her lesson, which was discussing the theme of discrimination from a perspective not yet considered during the previous lessons. While the main aim of “frontal” lectures was conveying “technical” contents, this workshop wanted to reflect upon discrimination starting from a group discussion and analysis of cases the attendees would share.

Before proceeding to a work in groups, Tarabusi asked the attendees to introduce themselves, clarifying their reasons to join the course and what they wanted to “bring back home” from the experience. Although the attendees had already introduced themselves more than once, their motivation had not explicitly emerged yet. It was, thus, opportune to start from their personal reasons, to better picture and understand their expectations about the course. This introductory phase was important not only to know more in-depth the attendees (in particular, to have more details about their migratory path, their experience in their arrival context, their relationship to the town of Forlì and its services), but also to encourage a more informal attitude from everyone and to create a more intimate atmosphere, which made the following teamwork easier.

Tarabusi introduced some discrimination cases and discussed them, highlighting the two different perspective from which they could have been “read” (from a service user’s point of view vs from an operator’s point of view), and presenting the idea of “implicit” discrimination. Hence, she

divided the attendees in two small groups of 4 people each. Each group –Tarabusi collaborated with one, and I collaborated with the other one- was asked to identify and describe a case of discrimination –preferably connected with the working world, so that they could be reported to the mentoring course, if necessary- directly or indirectly experienced. The assignment was to analyse the case starting from some specific elements: its context, people involved in it, the most problematic aspects of the event; (formal and informal) available/needed resources to deal with the discrimination suffered.

The groups described and discussed different cases of discrimination (here are some examples: a Register Office clerk from the North of Italy gave erroneous instructions to M.'s uncle when he asked for information about how to renew his driver's license; D. had to turn to the trade union because the company for whom she was working asked her to leave her job before the expiration of her contract, after she had claimed she did not want a renewal of the contract itself; K. Told her husband did not receive any subsistence allowance or overtime pay, unlike his Italian colleagues; R.C. reported some advances suffered at her workplace).

After a “spokesperson” from each group related to everyone the work carried out, Tarabusi encouraged a collective discussion which led to the identification of certain tools/strategies which enable workers to oppose the employer discretionary power:

- Awareness of the labour protection and rights;
- Experience as an element which helps in drawing a map of individual and collective (institutions, services, associations) resources, needed to widen the room for manoeuvre of each individual.

A rudimentary “map of the local resources” was drawn, based on the information and experiences the attendees shared to each other. To make the sharing go beyond the lesson, Tarabusi invited the attendees to exchange their contacts and “build a net” among them, first of all.

The subject of the local resources –who is in charge of what- was subsequently discussed by Milad Basir (Chairman of the Executive Committee and Responsible for Immigration at the Italian General Confederation of Labour –CGIL- Forlì), while individual resources were studied further on the occasion of the simulated job interview and the first follow-up.

22/05/2015, 17:00-20:30

Practice: Job interview simulation (Alessandro Martelli, Researcher in General Sociology, University of Bologna)

[See notes on Mentoring course]

28/05/2015, 9:00-12:30

Workshop: tools to make the most of one's competences to enter the labour market: Migrapass e CV (Francesca Crivellaro, Research Fellow in Cultural Anthropology, University of Bologna)

In the first part of our meeting, we resumed what happened during the simulation done on the 22/05/2015. In general, the attendees expressed satisfaction and appreciation and gave a positive evaluation of the simulated interview, considered to be a "useful exercise". We discussed the reasons behind the role inversion: as a matter of fact, this choice enabled the operators to realize how an applicant would like to be treated (courteously, respectfully), and gave the applicants the opportunity to understand how to deal with a job interview in the best possible way.

I believed it was needed to go back to a particular statement made by an attendee. On the occasion of the plenary session, continuing the role of a potential employer she played during the simulated interview, she claimed that she would have never hired a coloured person, especially not as a counter clerk. Her use of the first person when speaking confused the other attendees, who interpreted the operator comment as her personal prejudice. During the interview, she had the opportunity to clarify to someone that her comment was to be read as an "as if", actually. However, others did not fully realized what had occurred.

Once the misunderstanding was cleared up, the discussion was resumed from the posters elaborated on the occasion of the plenary session and those element which made the interview and the applicant profile "successful" were further analysed. In particular, we "extracted" some general strategies, described as successful even by the only representative of the working world (E.):

- Prepare the job interview in advance:
 - ✓ Get informed about the job offering company, the position offered and the competences required;
 - ✓ Identify all the limits which might jeopardize the recruitment in the first instance (i.e. not having a driver's license/not owing a vehicle; babies), in order to suggest possible solutions during the interview (i.e.: show familiarity with public transports; highlight there is a good network of friends and relatives who may help in conciliating children care and work);
 - ✓ Reflect and anticipate possible personal questions (i.e.: identification of good and bad qualities; willingness to be flexible), in order to avoid being tongue-tied during the interview. To this respect, some of the attendees highlighted they actually experienced this situation and saw the simulation as a useful exercise to prevent the same to occur again in the future (R.C.: "The day before an actual interview, I could simulate one with my partner");

- Handle the interview:
 - ✓ Give well structured answers, avoiding to speak in monosyllables and trying to anticipate possible interviewer questions, to make the interview as fluent as possible;
 - ✓ Display those social skills relevant to the role or position offered. For example, during the simulated interview, the applicant for the counter clerk position specified she was part of a gospel choir, stressing how much she like to be surrounded by other people;
 - ✓ Try to appear “authentic”, not presenting yourself as too perfect or too complaisant (NB: this was the comment by an operator from the *Comunità Papa Giovanni XXII* Association)
 - ✓ Avoid to ask immediately about the salary. However, this particular aspect-highlighted by E. during the simulated interview and introduced in terms of a proper taboo- was discussed. It was recognized that the salary was not the first question to be asked to the recruiters, under no circumstances (an attendee did it when she was younger); only in the event the payment issue do not emerge at all (according to the attendees, this may actually occurs), the issue can be raised.

Afterwards, there was a discussion about the interview as a performance and the boundary, not always clear, between lying/pretending and promoting themselves according to the specific requirements.

The second part of the meeting was devoted to the drawing up of a CV. Various models of CV suggested by some temporary agencies (Adecco, Manpower) were examined and discussed, along with the useful tips on the drawing up of the CVs given on their respective sites.

Since Migrapass has an extremely articulated and complex structure – and a format hardly usable for any application- work was limited on some specific sections of this tool: professional experience (including the experience in the home country) and social experience.

As well as before, also in the CV analysis we “extracted” some general strategies to adopt:

- Frequently update the CV, making sure to adjust it to the specific application, getting informed about the company to which it will be sent and about the position being offered. Display those professional experiences most consistent to that particular job;
- Double check if the temporary agency to whom the CV is being sent gives –on its website- any specific guideline about the drawing up, such as the maximum number of pages, the maximum number of competences, etc. (there are even agencies which provide a form to fulfil on their platforms);

- Indicate the educational qualifications and certifications obtained in the home country and, in the event a procedure for the recognition of foreign qualifications had been carried out, state it;
- Display previous professional experiences, without exaggerating or lying;
- When possible (some temporary agencies explicitly ask NOT to mention “personal interests” in the CV), specify those informal competences acquired through experiences carried out outside of the working sphere (being part of an association, doing voluntary work, participating to the life of a religious congregation, political activism, etc.).

This specific operation was particularly complex because some of the attendees found it difficult to differentiate a hobby (like running) from those personal interests-which may be more useful, for they make some of the applicants’ attitudes visible (social and organizational skills, attitude to being a leader, ability in taking care of other people)- which may be interesting to a recruiter. The discussion continued with the analysis of the aspects which should be displayed in the CV and of those which should rather be displayed during the interview.

Before concluding the meeting, I asked the attendees to bring their CVs with them the day after, so that we could work on them together after Milad Basir’s lesson. My idea was to submit the attendees’ CVs to the attention of the mentors I would have met the following day in the afternoon, in order to provide the training group with a feedback. However, since the only recruiter of the group was not there, this step had not been possible.

29/05/2015, 9:00-12:30

During the negotiation phase with local interlocutors, which came before the implementation of the training course, Milad Basir (met on 16th March 2015) claimed his willingness to conduct a seminar for the introduction of different types of contracts. The Scientific Committee believed it was advisable to take this opportunity. However, during the course it emerged that knowing better the local resources (services, organizations and institutions supporting the immigrants) available in the area of Forlì was much more needed to the training course attendees. Basir was, thus, asked to focus on this issue in the specific instance.

A two hour long lesson was arranged, in order to set aside some time to conclude the course (conclusion of all the previous “pending” topics, time to complete an assessment questionnaire and delivery of a certificate of participation).

Lesson: Guidance to Local Services (Milad Basir, Chairman of the Executive Committee and Responsible for Immigration at the Italian General Confederation of Labour –CGIL- Forlì)

Before the lesson started, Basir asked to see the attendees’ profiles and circulated in advance some material concerning the procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications obtained in the home country.

Milad Basir introduced himself and the organization for which he works (CGIL). There was also an introduction of the guidance to local services topic, starting from two key issues:

- Equal treatment of immigrants at the workplace and discrepancy between legal and everyday life levels;
- Relationship between different residence permits (36 types) and rights (particularly related to the access to social and health care services) and duties

Basir gave many examples related to troubles migrants may face, not only in the working sphere (retirement recognition, unemployment benefit, disability pension), but also in their daily life (family joining, children integration in the educational systems, handling the relationships with the landlords, recognition of foreign qualifications, access to specific services – i.e. free school transport service and canteen – on the basis of income, property and household (ISEE, in Italy).

He also gave space to the attendees' questions. They made the most of his presence to express some of their doubts (P.C. asked whether it was possible for a competitive state examination to be open only to a specific trade union members; D. asked if there was anything old people who worked off the books their whole life and had never paid any contribution could do; N. asked how to apply for an invalidity pension).

End of the Works (Francesca Crivellaro, Research Fellow in Cultural Anthropology, University of Bologna; James Foschi, IECOB, University of Bologna)

The drawing up of a CV was resumed. We compared together some of the CVs they brought and reflected upon how to enhance it. Moreover, I introduced the standard EU language skill scheme (the attendees had already received the scheme by email the previous day, when an introduction of this language skill description method had been made).

P.C. shared his doubts about how to write a good cover letter. James Foschi gave some information (be concise and explain why you are the right person for the position you are applying for; display all those competences acquired in previous work experiences which may be coherent to the competences required for the job you are applying for). Starting from an online search for different cover letter examples, we initiated a meta-reflection upon specific methods used for different applications, looking for all the recurring and, somehow, crucial elements. Moreover, some cover letter examples were drafted among all.

Once the practice was concluded, James Foschi gave all the attendees an assessment questionnaire, providing some guidelines to follow. Questionnaires were fulfilled anonymously. According to one person, time dedicated to certain topics was not enough; according to another person, some of the lecturers were not clear enough. However, in general, the attendees attributed high scores to many elements of the course (often 5 –the maximum- and never beneath

4). Although only 4 attendees took part to the assessment, it is worth highlighting what they suggested to implement the training course in the future:

- Invite some business executive from public/private/multinational companies who may explain how recruitment in this specific field works;
- Spread information about the course through multiple and more diversified channels; many migrants do not belong to any association and it is more difficult to them to have this kind of information.