



FACILITATE TRANSCULTURAL
RELATIONSHIPS IN
MULTIETHNIC MANUFACTURING
ENTERPRISES

The present document is meant to supply the main guidelines relative to the innovative approach we are developing within FA.RE project. Up to now, the adequate and positive professional integration of the multiethnic workforce within companies is left to the free initiative of companies themselves, who often have not the adequate competences to do that. When needed, companies may refer to external intermediaries such as cultural mediators. Yet, cultural mediators cannot support companies in managing the complexity of the internal organization that inevitably arises when it has to be managed human resources with mother languages and cultures of origin that differ among themselves and from the company's.

Within FA.RE we are going to train worker(s) within companies so as to take on the role of **Facilitator of transcultural relationships within multiethnic enterprises** and acquire the necessary competences to be able to transfer a relational process of negotiation and mutual recognition among workers of different ethnic groups, sustain the process of overcoming the cultural misunderstandings and sense of uneasiness that may emerge in interpersonal relationships within the multiethnic enterprise, transfer concepts and behaviors that foster the sense of belonging to the company organization, be a “bridging” figure of bi-directional support (workers/entrepreneur, entrepreneur/workers) that facilitates the organizational and work learning, especially when relational skills are weakened by poor knowledge of autochthonous language.

THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH OF THE FACILITATOR'S FUNCTION

1) There are 3 dimensions of the Diversity: among different territories, within the same territory, within communities (such as companies).

Job is very important in order to gain/have an identity because the *Working Identity triggers the Social Identity of individuals*.

Immigrant workers have a different juridical treatment within the territory and and this puts them in a position of difference within companies that cannot be denied: for example, they need permits in order to have time to carry out all the bureaucratic procedures for their stay.

2) The approach of FA.RE project focuses on the fact that *Diversity is something constant*. The training of the “Facilitator of intercultural relationships within companies” basis on the *pedagogy of Relation and not that of Diversity*. The Facilitator has to help workers to communicate together so as to give value to the *Intercultural Competences* present in the workplace.

3) The main new concept here developed is that Human Resources have to be addressed within companies with an *approach based on Relationships* (to develop relationships among colleagues). The Facilitator develops a participative process within the company that improves relationships.

4) The Facilitator refers to the specific organizational context of a company. So far, FA.RE intends to overcome also the limits of “diversity management” because it foresees an *approach towards intercultural relationships within the company in a “bottom-up” way: differences are given value in the aim to legitimate the belonging of immigrant workers to the community of the company they work in*. On the contrary, diversity management has a “top-down” approach aiming at the exploitation of differences to reach results.

5) The approach of the Facilitator is constructive, oriented towards integration and creation of the *company’s Competence of Transculturalism*. A company needs fast solutions and does not need that someone brings in complexity. The Facilitator is an investment that increases the value of the *Company Identity*.

6) It is a *Function, not a Role or a Position within the company*, that it is possible to activate only when needed. It is not an “Institutional” role.

7) It is a function *focusing on the quality of life of workers and integration*.

8) The Facilitator is a worker who can act as “*bridge*” between the management and the immigrant workers, useful to improve the company organization whenever there are foreign workers who face integration difficulties. It is also a “*tutoring*” function that can be competent help both in terms of bi-directional support and strengthening (employees/employer, employer/employees), and of the recovery (on the part of foreigners) of the relational capacities weakened by the poor knowledge of the autochthonous language and the new organizational and work learning.

9) The Facilitator *intervenes in the relation between the foreign workers, improving their sense of belonging to the work environment*, getting over the difficulties often created by inadequate intercultural communication. “*Work environment*” here is meant as the space for the relation and the interaction with other workers, with the company and the professional learning.

10) This function does *represent NEITHER the ownership/management, NOR the workers. The Facilitator is NOT representative of Union interests*. The Facilitator tells to immigrant colleagues to address within the company to the person appointed for Union interests, *because the Facilitator has not to get in conflict with roles that are already appointed to others* (such as the trade unionist or Heads of Department). The Facilitator is not an Institutional/Legal role and cannot overcome some borders that can make legal issues/problems to arise. It is a worker with functions related to processes and relationship who *neither expropriates other professional positions nor replaces them, but rather connects all the company organization process workers*.

11) The Facilitator has not be compulsory immigrant or of the same ethnic group of immigrant workers, but has for sure to be a *Role Model*, also in the sense that he/she stimulates immigrant workers to make a career. When immigrant, The Facilitator indirectly shows that it is possible also for immigrant workers (and not only for autochthonous ones) to have professional chances to improve. In any case, the Facilitator has to have those *linguistic Intercultural Competences* that are necessary to carry out the function (in this sense it’s more likely that immigrant workers have them).

- 12) The Facilitator facilitates meta-communication and not a specific ethnic group.
- 13) It is not possible to build the profile of the Facilitator on the basis of Language knowledge and it is necessary to shift to *Cultural Capabilities*.
- 14) The Facilitator is a resource that can be re-activated throughout time within the company, when necessary, according to specific situations (such as the entry of new workers). *The function is carried out successfully if there is no need of his intervention.*
- 15) The Facilitator's function reflects the organizational and/or operational context and modifies its shape according to context variables, in particular to the goals and the nature of the company organization.

CULTURAL MEDIATORS VERSUS FACILITATORS OF TRANSCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN COMPANIES

- 1) Cultural Mediators are external actors, when they act within companies. They are delegate to Diversity and *they do not enter into relation* with the overall organization/company structure during their activity.
- 2) Cultural Mediators are usually asked to intervene for surviving issues. While the presence of a Cultural Mediator emphasizes the cultural diversity, the *Facilitator emphasizes the belonging to the same working community (company)*. The interest of the company in having such a function integrated, is the improvement of the working community. The Facilitator, in fact, looks for and works on those values that create connection/linkage and not those linked to diversity. *The Facilitator focuses on the quality of life of workers and deep integration.*
- 3) Cultural Mediators act in *episodic way*, when necessary to people/situations, while the *Facilitator builds up a relationship within the company with workers.*

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPING THE FUNCTION OF FACILITATOR WITHIN COMPANY

- 1) The immigrant worker(s) chosen for to carry out this function is a *concrete and strong indicator that the company gives value to the inter-culture and to company immigrant workforce*. In this way the Facilitator has a completely new legitimation to act.
- 2) The worker who acts as Facilitator *does not change his working position, this function is complementary to any daily working tasks foreseen in worker's contract.*
- 3) The Relationship Facilitator's competences can be described as the *integrated set of skills and knowledge that consider all the cultural and language distinctive features and the experiences made by workers as an added value.*
- 4) The Facilitator's training is proposed as a *training towards change*, the idea of a pedagogical work that can foresee new horizons in the multi-culture and also new opportunities. The Facilitator functions can be summarized as the *relationship process of negotiation and mutual recognition among workers belonging to*

different ethnic groups, but at the same time comparison and sharing, that is, a way through which one can master new learning, meanings and values to favor the sense of belonging to a company organization and overcome the difficulties often resulting from inadequate intercultural communication.

5) Facilitator's expertise is necessarily gained by means of a *gradual development of a learning-by-doing practice in the field* (i.e. within company). The Facilitator is an highly innovative function for enterprises, that needs to be tested and gradually consolidated through direct experience in the workplace.

6) *The Facilitator is not an additional professional role/person to be employed, but is a company (foreign) employee who has specific cultural-linguistic competences (Intercultural Competences); he can "read" the relationship dynamics in the company from a strategically methodological point of view, offering an interpretation of the organizational relations with regard to foreign workers.*

7) When choosing a potential Facilitator, *much attention has to be paid towards those people already having an official Role of guarantee towards interests of workers or company*. Different official/formal roles would be better not to be mixed up with the Facilitator function. For example, it would be better that the responsible of Trade Union relations wouldn't be trained as Facilitator in order not to create confusion and let formal roles to continue to guarantee the interests they represent. In case this is not possible and/or a company believes that the adequate cultural capabilities to be Facilitator belong to a person already appointed with other formal roles, than it will be very important to train *the Facilitator so as to be neutral* when acting.

8) *Communication* is an aspect of greatest importance for the Facilitator. The *communication strategies become competences and not only tools for the Facilitator* who acts as a connection or a joint between different realities; he/she intermediates between the demands and the expression of needs and also the conflicts that may inevitably arise among the subjects involved in a relationship.

9) The Areas of action of the Facilitator can be 4:

- *facilitating the organizational and work learning* and therefore to support processes;
- *facilitating relationships*, giving support to overcome cultural misunderstandings and the possible sense of uneasiness resulting from interpersonal relationships;
- *facilitating communication*, being a "mediator" between different communicative realities;
- *facilitating the interpretation/understanding of the company multicultural reality*, using strategies to manage the situations that emerge.

10) On the basis on its size, one company may have *one Facilitator for each department/area*, in order to make the action of the employees who will perform this function more forceful and well structured.

11) When introducing the function, it is relevant to organize meetings with the presence of the overall workforce in the aim of explaining the motivations for the company choice and the main innovations that will be brought about in the organization. The meetings are also intended to *give credit and legitimize the Facilitator's function among the colleagues*.

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