



Newsletter #1 2015

Story Regions



Story Regions, meeting in Alden Biesen, Belgium. Back row, from left: Anders Karlsson (project leader, Sweden), Guy Tilkin (Belgium), Simone Fenqil and Ugo Sandulli (Italy), Maria Egielman and Piotr Kostuchowski (Poland) and Julia Busche (Germany). In middle: Mia Verbeelen (storytelling ambassador in Vlaanderen, Belgium). Sitting from left: Madie Smeets, Patricia Huion and Ellen Frissaer (Belgium) and storyteller Jan Blake (Great Britain).

We are surrounded by stories. Stories are in our memories, in our family history, our street, city or country. Stories come up when we meet friends, colleagues, neighbours ... They deal with daily life, happiness, grief, anger, fear or just faits divers. Stories help us build a community and gain trust. J.P. Sartre in 'La Nausea' writes: "Man is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his own stories and the ones from the others, he sees all that happens to him through these stories and he tries to live his life as if he is telling it." Also the use of narratives and stories in teaching and learning has been put forward by educators as an appealing and successful approach. Narrative is known to be a fundamental structure of human meaning making and personal development.

The concept of 'learning regions' indicates that effective learning also takes place in a societal context and that in a community there are many more organisations (other than schools and colleges) offering or facilitating learning. The socio-cultural and cultural sectors certainly qualify as 'fertile soil' for place based learning, learning for culture and learning through culture.

These ideas constitute the background for **Story Regions**, an Erasmus+ project. In **Story Regions** we want to explore the potential of oral storytelling as a tool for learning for different target groups in adult education and in social and cultural contexts. The project will focus on the linguistic (mother tongue and foreign languages), interactive, social, heritage, identity building, cultural and multicultural aspects of stories and storytelling and on its power to generate communication and 'belonging'.

Community development

In Europe inclusion is a growing issue and communication a more than ever needed key competence. Content, language and performance turn stories into genuine products of the culture they are based in. A revitalisation of storytelling would help communities to regain a link with their own heritage and identity and would provide them with an instrument to better understand each other, this by using stories as carriers of (cultural, historical) knowledge and to practice listening and speaking skills.

Storytelling offers:

- a common approach to learning that transcends the formal and non-formal education sectors and the socio-cultural sectors. Storytelling is extremely well fit to lower the threshold for participation and learning and to create innovative and attractive pathways to the development of key competences: literacy, foreign languages, cultural awareness, civic and entrepreneurial competences.
- tools for inclusion as storytelling is a way of expressing individual and cultural identity, inviting the listener to identify with "the other". Anyone who gets to tell his/her story and is heard finds a sense of being part of the group, the community.
- tools for community development, common tools and approaches for local and regional organisations to cooperate on common goals and the creation of an inter-sectorial and inter-organisational network.

The innovation of the **Story Regions** project lies in introducing storytelling approaches and techniques as a binding factor to unite the different learning and socio-cultural sectors in a community in a common approach to cooperation for learning, for community development and for inclusion. It will try to achieve this by developing the professional competences of teachers, trainers, social & cultural workers and storytelling curators and by creating regional inter-sectorial storytelling networks with European links.

Developing Story Regions involves a number of activities such as:

- mapping the different actors in a community that play a role in (non-formal) learning
- needs analysis among these actors for developing storytelling based projects
- developing a competence profile of a 'storytelling curator'
- methodology development for intersectorial cooperation through storytelling
- collecting good practice in Europe
- piloting storytelling community projects
- organizing national dissemination & training days
- creating guidelines and publishing a manual

Follow **Story Regions** on www.storyregions.se and through these monthly Newsletters.

Project partners:

Region Västerbotten, coordinator (Sweden)
Landcommanderij Alden Biesen (Belgium)
Q21, Agency for Qualification and Transfer Management (Germany)
Bielskie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Teatr Grodzki (Poland)
Scuola Holden (Italy)



Erasmus+