

Meet'In EuroMed

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Education and Culture

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Participants of the Second TOTEM seminar in El Minya, Egypt, describe their impressions of the 'immersion day'— an activity of the training course where they spend an entire day, in groups of three, with a local non-governmental organisations, experiencing local realities, learning from the field and sharing their own skills. The aim is to put participants in direct contact with the local community through NGOs, who often act as the direct channels to the local population.



Adva, from Israel, spent a day with an NGO called 'Egyptian Future Youth Foundation' (EFYF).

"The participants in the organization are volunteers and they do that because of a much bigger gain than money, they get organizational experience, they get to meet different people, cultures and traditions and of course a lot of knowledge.

We spend time with the organisation members at their offices, visited the city market, had a traditional lunch followed by a sail on a Felucca We had the chance to talk to our one-day colleagues, formally and informally, to let the barriers down and really immerse.

This doesn't describe everything we have learned, and I am not sure that our feelings can be described well enough in few words but I can say that we had an amazing learning experience. It was particularly interesting to learn about the organisation's unique way of looking at youth work."

Barbara, from Austria, spent her 'immersion day' with the 'Good-shepard Association', which runs seven

ral community centres all over El Minya, one of which is located in the village of Ibouna.



"My immersion day overcame my expectations. The Association is. The Association is working in many fields. I was especially touched by the contact with the local community. The kids at the school were so curious to talk with us. I have been also lucky to get

TOTEM Participant's perspective



the opportunity to visit one of the families of the village. After sharing photos and chatting with arms and legs, it was very surprising how open they were during our visit. It was a very emotional and touching experience for me."



Menna, from Egypt, visited a project aimed at combating woman illiteracy in rural areas.

"In my group, Ann from Belgium, Isabelle from Sweden, and me, spent the day with an NGO working mainly on local development and promotion of the role of women in the society, running several long-term projects."

"Even as an Egyptian, I felt like a foreigner as this was my first time to visit such a local community in the rural areas of Egypt."

"We met the NGOs manager and staff and had an overview of their objectives, activities, and management system. For us the real experience started when we went to a field visit in an area called "Kafr El-Kady" in the Western part of El Minya. We visited a class specialised in combating women illiteracy. It was particularly interesting to talk to these women about their motivation to continue their education to face the challenges in their community."

"They wanted to know about our culture and traditions and asked Ann and Isabelle about the condition of women in their respective countries. With all the rich cultural diversity in our discussions, we agreed on how rich and spicy this meal was in our long learning experience in the TOTEM Seminar Two."

Ali Oktay Koç, from Turkey, spent a day with the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services, an NGO working to improve the quality of life in Egyptians villages. Through its activities, it has created some 200 jobs.



"This NGO gets financial support from local and international organisations. Their mission statement can be described as two-fold: Production and education. They help local communities in various micro-projects, insisting on inclusion of local people. They also carry out a training programme so as to multiply this dynamic, so the local community can bring back new skills to their villages and help other project develop. For example, we visited a furniture factory as well as a plant and flower farm. I had the chance to take part in a workshop aimed at training volunteers from

other NGOs in nearby villages. They were all so motivated that they did not have any break for three hours."



Rasa, from Lithuania, visited the Good Shepard Association for Development in El Minya, heavily involved in community work, with a strong accent on inclusion of marginalised populations.

"I was really impressed by what this organisation is doing. They work with the poor, marginalised and neediest amongst the community to give them back their human dignity by empowering them, reinforcing their participation and local resources in order to create a long-lasting impact."

Zita, from Latvia, describes another central activity of the TOTEM: leading workshops as a trainer.



"Leading workshops as a tool for learning is one of the best tools for shaping new trainers. This necessitates us, trainers, to present new skills learned in front of others and to work intensively on developing and drawing new projects through cooperation. The benefits of these workshops were more than valuable; in addition to my own experience of leading workshops, I also learned from observing my colleagues, and giving them feedback and guidelines for improvement. In one sentence, it was an unforgettable experience."