

iMOtion

iMOtion - Framing Informal Moments (IM) in Trainings

Informal session as a getting to know each other and group building

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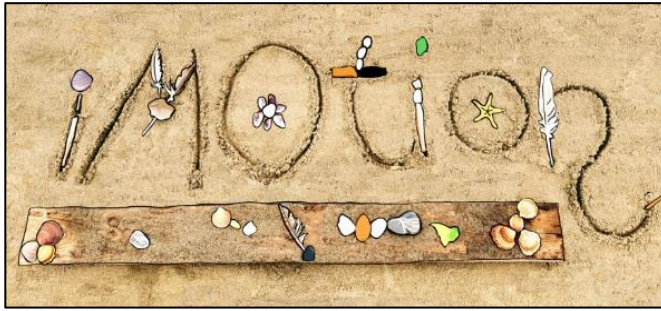
The beginning of any international Erasmus+ training is always a very special time, people arrive, very often tired from their travels, sometimes with confused ideas about the program, not knowing each other and often not even being clear about where they are.

At this stage, trainers look for strategies to accelerate the process of getting to know each other among participants, while at the same time welcoming them in a way that they can feel ready to begin the training adventure. In Erasmus+ trainings addressed to adults, participants often happen to have strong resistance to getting involved and participating in activities such as presenting themselves in front of the group or playing games to learn names. This difficulty, which we have found over the years especially with some adults, arises for various reasons. They are not used to nonformal trainings or they do not feel like getting involved from the first moment with a group and people they do not know. Forcing them since day one to get to know each other and do team building activities could generate in some an emotional discomfort that is surely to be an obstacle to the process of integration and learning. Each group expresses different individualities with different cultures, different sensitivities, different intelligences. Therefore, introverted participants at the beginning will find it much more difficult than extroverted participants to get involved in team building activities.

During the training course held in the Lab phase of the Erasmus+ project iMOtion, on the first day we proposed a two-and-a-half-hour informal session for getting to know each other and learning.



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The definition of informal moments as **framed spaces and times that are deliberately intended for informal learning, group dynamics, recreation, and well-being**, inspired us to invite participants to this session in order to welcome the group, accelerate the process of getting to know each other among participants and create a positive atmosphere to begin the learning process.

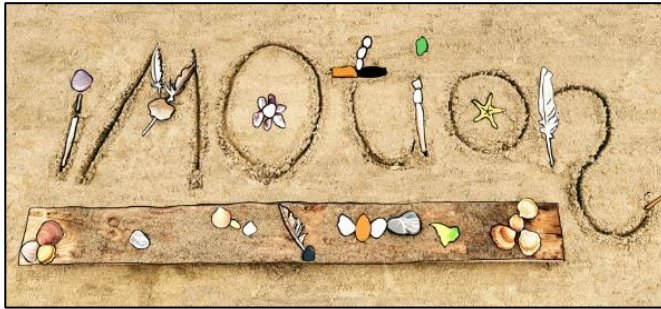
After 5 minutes of a formal welcome in the class and a brief intro on the program of the training, we invited participants to leave for a group a two and a half walk in the neighbourhoods to explore the urban and naturalistic area around the training center and the other participants.

Through this informal activity, we wanted to provide a temporal and physical space that could in a spontaneous and natural way, facilitate the meeting and getting to know each other among the participants, create a relaxed emotional climate, and promote knowledge of the context where the course was taking place. In this time frame, the group walked freely in the city and people spontaneously began to introduce themselves to each other. They started to get to know each other better by discussing a wide variety of topics, from motivations to participate in the course to aspects of their private life. Everyone had managed to make initial contact with more than half of the group, and the trainers were also able to get to know the participants in a relaxed way by observing different authentic ways of acting and interacting

At the end of the two and a half hours we reflected upon the experience. A feeling of well-being emerged from everyone due to the fact that everyone felt free to move around, to decide with whom to talk, about what to talk and for how long. The fact of walking, then physically activating oneself to helped make the exchanges and spontaneous meeting dynamic. Participants really appreciated being free to move around and decide how to get involved. This



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allowed them to feel more comfortable, to positively predispose themselves for the course and to get to know others in an authentic way.

This practice allowed us to reflect on the importance of simplicity in training. Often trainers fall into the trap of searching among thousands of activities for the "coolest" one to do in a group building phase, with the risk of over structuring these moments. Informal spaces and moments can make the welcoming, the getting to know each other and the group building phase a spontaneous and effective process that's respectful of the diversity.

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