3 Competence Model and Training Programme for Empowerment Educators
Competence Model and Training Program for Empowerment Educators for Girls’ and Young Women*

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1 Introduction
The third intellectual output of the project "Empowerment education of girls* and young women*, through educating youth educators and creating girls* centres*” implemented by the international partnership of Autonomia Foundation, Garance ASBL, and Mädchenstift 2”Zimtstern”/Autonome Frauenzentrum Potsdam e.V. is a publication on the competencies of people who are involved in education and youth work that is focused on empowerment education for girls* and young women*.

The competence model for empowerment educators and the training for trainers are a key stage for the further and extensive development of girls* empowerment centres, which is the goal of our project.

This publication, together with the two preceding ones, constitutes a whole. Therefore, it is based on the contents of the first publication "Operating Model for Girls* Empowerment Centres" (1/1, hereinafter “Operating Model for GEC) and the second publication "Empowerment Education Curriculum for Girls* and Young Women*" (1/2, hereinafter “Empowerment Education Curriculum”). The purpose and dimensions of this third publication is to present the following framework: The practical implementation that takes place when we apply the approaches, solutions and actions described in the above-mentioned publications.

Therefore, we first recommend that you familiarize yourself with those publications. In “Operating Model for GEC”, we particularly recommend Chapter 5 entitled “The Foundations for the Empowerment Work with Girls* and Young Women*”, which includes sections on empowerment as a strategy and tool, principles of designing empowerment activities. In addition, it includes the most important topics and stances in empowerment work with girls* and young women*, as well as Chapter 7 on “The Staff in Girls* Empowerment Centres – function and competences”.

Finally, we recommend a careful reading of the entire “Empowerment Education Curriculum”, which serves as an indispensable introduction to the reflection on the competencies of people who support empowerment. It includes, inter alia, descriptions of characteristic pedagogical approaches and a proposal for an empowerment and anti-violence education program for girls* and young women*.

1.1 Why was this publication created?

The people who work with children and youth have a great effect on the quality of this work. Their competencies – knowledge, skills and attitudes – determine whether the actions they undertake will promote or hamper empowerment and anti-discrimination.

After describing the “Operating Model” and the “Empowerment Education Curriculum”, this publication aims to answer the following questions:

- What does it mean to be an empowerment educator for girls*, teenagers and young women*?
- Which competencies are needed to be able to create conditions for their emancipation and reinforcement; for building their high self-esteem; for openness, empathy, resilience, agency; and solidarity; the ability to make independent decisions and engage in critical thinking; the ability to resist oppression, exclusion, and violence?
- What elements should be included in the training of trainers on empowerment education?

We would like to emphasize that for a real change in the situation of girls* and young women*, it is necessary to not only create specialized “centres” focused on empowerment and countering gender-based violence – including specialized staff. It is also necessary to integrate the gender perspective and, more broadly, an intersectional perspective and diversity into the mainstream of all educational activities with children and youth.

1.2 For whom was this publication created?

This publication can be useful in both non-formal and formal education. It is aimed, on the one hand, at people working or in training to work with children and youth, e.g. youth workers, educators, teachers, psychologists, therapists, peer educators (people involved in peer education), activists, members of youth movements and organizations, or working for children and youth.

On the other hand, another primary target audience of the model are educational institutions who are training teachers, psychologists, etc., e.g. universities, training organizations and institutions responsible for the professional development of teachers.

This publication may also be useful for people involved in research within the field of youth and children and people who have an impact on policies and other legal and practical solutions affecting children and youth and education, e.g. decision-makers.

There are many standards and models of trainers' competencies – also in the field of youth work. In order not to duplicate their content – in this publication we assume that people interested in the standards of work with youth and in trainer's work – will independently read the basic publications in this area. For example, at the European level the “Competence Model for Trainers” (ETS 1) (Saito Youth 2014), which was developed as part of the “European Training Strategy” with its updated version, and the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio are of particular importance. In both models, there are several elements which apply in particular to the international and intercultural dimensions of youth work. In addition, the concept and objectives of the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio and the Youthpass as well as the validation and certification methods available to those participating in the Youth Program activities are very similar. Both models are extensive and detailed. In this publication we also refer to these models.
In European countries, including the countries in which our project partners operate (Poland, Germany, and Belgium), various models of trainers’ competencies already exist and serve as a reference point for us.

The aim of our publication is therefore not to replace the preexisting, high-quality models, but to instead focus on key areas that highlight and connect to work focused on empowerment and countering discrimination and violence based on gender and other identities and identifications (intersectional perspective).

1.3 Empowerment Reading

We describe people who read this publication as “Writers” (Writers-Readers), as in previous publications by Autoroma (Teutsch 2016). This term refers directly to the concept of “Spectator” (spectator-actor) in the Theater of the Oppressed, created by Augusto Boal (2002). It allows us to visualize, appreciate and facilitate the position of a person who reads actively and critically visible as an individual who consciously draws from their competencies in the reading process, who refers to their experiences, applies and creates new solutions and approaches for future activities. Through reading and reflecting (e.g., asking questions, looking for answers, revealing doubts, referring to one’s knowledge, including experience) the readers then become co-authors and co-creators of this publication.

This approach makes reading itself a tool of empowerment. The act of writing and choosing what to write about and the act of reading can both be tools of change and liberation – individually and collectively.

We encourage all readers to critically reflect and read the content proposed in the following paragraph.

Questions for reflection (sample):

- What do I think about the things I have read?
- Why do I think this way?
- What do I see differently and why?
- What am I missing here?
- How does what I have read relate to my preexisting knowledge, including my experience?
- What questions did I have while reading?
- To which questions am I looking for answers?
- What else do I want to know?
- How do I understand a given issue (now)?
- What is clearer for me now, and what is still incomprehensible? Do I want to do anything to change it, and if so, what can I do?
- How can I use/apply what I have read and thought about?
- What do I want to change in my work?
- What have I learned about myself?
- What do I feel about what I have read, what do I think?
- What was difficult and why?
- What gives me strength and why?
- What can I do with my power? What will it be useful for?

1 For a more detailed account on intersectionality please see IDI, chapter 5.3. Important Stances in Girls’ Empowerment Work.
In the following chapter, we outline the competencies that we consider to be crucial in conducting educational activities aimed at supporting the empowerment of girls* and young women*.

We refer to the structure and content of the “Competence model for trainers working at the International level ETS II” and several other standards of competencies for anti-discrimination and anti-violence educators in the field of non-formal education, like the Wen-Do Training Academy Standard of the Autonomia foundation (Teutsch 2016), the Anti-Discrimination Training Academy model described in the publication “Antidiscrimination Education. Manual for trainers” (Branka and Ciesiłowka 2010) or other publications, such as “Antidiscrimination. Educational toolkit” (Podsiadło-Dacewicz 2005).

An important expectation for reflection on the competence of a person facilitating empowerment education is the recognition that there is no such thing as a universal, singular, exhaustive and finite model.

As it has already been mentioned in “Operation Model”, studies on empowerment and emancipatory pedagogy indicate that models are difficult to describe, operationalize, structure, or institutionalize because this can in fact block the process of real empowerment. It might stiffen and distort it, lead to the freezing of the process of change, make the actions contrary to the original meaning and purpose (Czerpaniak-Walczak 2006).

Due to the diversity of identities, identifications, experiences, educational backgrounds and cultural origins of empowerment educators, it is important for readers to use the guidelines consciously and with the goal of supporting the empowerment process through educational activities. In this context, it will be helpful to deepen one’s understanding and practical implementation of ethical codes developed in educators’ and trainers’ associations and those countering discrimination and violence, to constantly develop one’s competencies including, but not limited to the following ways: to develop awareness of one’s position, privileges, abilities and limitations, to consciously and intentionally take care of one’s psychophysical well-being, and to subject one’s work to supervision.

2.1 Who is an empowerment educator for girls* and young women*?

First of all, it is worth noting that the definition of the role to be fulfilled by a person who can be called an empowerment educator would be a role in which the individual supports the process of empowerment through education. There are no “empowerment teachers” – no one can teach others how to be empowered. Empowerment educators are people who have competencies (knowledge, skills and specific values/attitudes), resources and privileges that they (can) intentionally use to support the empowerment of people, specifically from oppressed groups. People from those groups are at the center of empowerment education. Therefore, we will use the terms “empowerment educator” and “a person/educator supporting the empowerment process” interchangeably throughout this publication.

Secondly, an empowerment educator is a person who has the experience of living as a woman* or who has been socialized as a woman. At the same time, gender is only one of many dimensions within a person’s identity. Others of particular importance include age, health status, socio-economic status, disability* (Annamma et al. 2013), psychosexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnic origin and nationality, and more.

In the “Operating Model” we emphasize that the work of cis-gendered people who identify as a male and were identified as such at birth should be treated as an exception. When implementing programs, it should be made clear in advance whether, why and how cis-identifying men can be involved in certain program activities.

If empowerment educators have experienced violence or systemic oppression – and taking into account the lived experiences and research on gender-based oppression – this applies, depending on the forms of violence or violations, to between 25%, 60%, 90%, 100% of people who were raised and/or live as girls* and women. It is highly recommended for those people to participate in various forms of empowerment activities, including reflection (work) on the violence and discrimination they experienced themselves.

The responsibility of an educator supporting the process of empowerment is demanding both in terms of content as well as methodology and ethics. Their role of modeling behavior and attitudes is of great importance – in relation to countering discrimination and violence with the use of empowerment strategies.

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2 You can read the ethical codes of the Antidiscrimination Education Society in Poland (Towarzystwo Edukacji Antydyskryminacyjnej) [https://uhea.org/pl/kodeks-etyczny-czlonkow-i-czlonek-towarzystwa-edukacji-antydyskryminacyjnej], accessed: 1.05.2021.

3 The spelling “disability” (or disability) illustrates the social construct in which people with dis-abilities are hindered from fully participating in society by the normative ideas and barriers imposed on them (Annamma et al. 2013).

4 Are you a cis-man and are wondering if this brochure is for you? Yes, absolutely! You can be a feminist, a well-informed and sensitized ally. This brochure can help you take into consideration how emancipatory empowerment for girls* and young women* can be included in your field of work.
2.2 Best practice principles of non-formal education

In the "Amended version" of the “ETS Competence Model for Trainers” working at an international level, criteria and indicators were integrated as an integral part of the "European Training Strategy II" (Amended Version, ETS II). These principles relate to non-formal education (Salto Youth, 2014: 3):

- Learner-centeredness (i.e., a focus on the learner and their development);
- Agreement between trainers and learners on learning objectives;
- Transparency;
- Confidentiality;
- Attention to content and methodology;
- Voluntariness;
- Participation;
- Ownership;
- Democratic values and practices.

2.3 Competences: attitudes, knowledge, and skills

Generally, when we talk about trainer competences, we refer to three dimensions: attitudes (sometimes described as awareness and values), knowledge, and skills.

The ETS II model has the following six competence areas: "Understanding and facilitating individual and group learning processes", "Learning to learn", "Designing educational programmes", "Cooperating successfully in teams", "Communicating meaningfully with others", and "Intercultural competence" (Salto Youth 2014: 2).

In this study, we will focus only on those competences that we consider particularly important in facilitating empowerment education. Therefore we follow the guidelines published by Bohm et al. (2009).

The list on "how to be an empowerment educator" is an "ideal" model. The skills and knowledge listed below are part of a lifelong learning process, in which we all are learning and developing our skills.

How to be an empowerment educator

Attitudes and values

- **Openness** – readiness to get to know oneself and to change; to critically reflect on one’s own beliefs, prejudices and behavioral patterns; willingness to get to know others (their perspectives, experiences, values); appreciate diversity; readiness to use tools of professional support, e.g. counseling, supervision;
- **Belief in inherent human dignity, subjectivity and autonomy of each person;**
- **Belief in the equality of all people** regardless of any characteristics, in particular: gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, ethnic or national origin, skin color, age, health status, beliefs, religion, dis-ability, socio-economic status; every human being should be able to live without fear, be able to freely define themselves, their goals and choose their path in life;
- **Awareness of and opposing inequalities and discrimination based on gender and other identities, both on an (inter-)personal and systemic level;**
- **Respect for others** – internalized belief, that the participants of the activities are experts of their own, they are able to think, create and act on their own;
- **Solidarity** – with others, with people from other marginalized groups in the pursuit of freedom, justice and equality;
- **Courage** – understood as the ability to act in accordance with one’s own beliefs, as well as readiness to show one’s own sensitivity/vulnerability; readiness to actively participate in solving difficult situations, e.g. group conflicts;
- **Assertiveness** – as an attitude (I’m okay/I’m enough and it’s ok that other people are different); as the ability to express one’s own beliefs and feelings without attacking others; awareness of one’s own boundaries and respect for the boundaries of others;
- **Sensitivity and empathy** – taking into account other people’s well-being and interests, as well as their needs and expectations;
- **Awareness of one’s own experiences**, behavior, role, and reactions in the context of discrimination and violence;
- **Perception** of the educational situation as one in which all people are equally important and learn from each other;
- **Responsibility** – with regard to one’s role and influence on the people who participate in the activities;
- **Awareness of one’s own limitations** and incompetencies and the ability to provide a fair disclosure of such situations to oneself and others; recognizing one’s own limited influence and control (in certain situations/contexts);
- **Focus on constantly developing and evaluating one’s skills**, knowledge and attitudes (within a safe space);
- **Emotional stability** – accepting the existence of difficulties and tensions between people and being open towards dealing with differences, misunderstandings and conflicts; ability to maintain one’s emotional balance;
- **Curiosity and creativity** – the ability to creatively and spontaneously respond to a given situation to experiment and to look for new solutions; curiosity of the world;
- **Commitment to social change**, towards greater diversity, justice, and the implementation of human rights;
- **Last but not least** – **Enthusiasm!**

Skills

- **Ability to create an educational process that leads to people’s liberation**, helps them to become aware, critical, creative, free, and active;
- **Knowledge and application of educational techniques, methods, and tools that support the empowerment process**, especially knowledge of the tools and methods of empowerment work with girls* and young women* and the knowledge of good practices in this field;
- **Critical thinking, reading, critical analysis** of materials, methods, and tools in terms of their impact on the empowerment process;
- **Ability to use breathe, voice and body work** in empowerment educational activities;
- **Ability to build an atmosphere of respect** in which each person can safely express themselves and their views and actively participate in any educational process;
- **Ability to build an educational situation as a dialogic process** based on the participants’ knowledge, skills, experiences, and abilities, in which each person is both a learner and a teacher;
- **Ability to build education around problems/dilemmas, as people learn best when they engage with them**.

You will find the competences, criteria, and indicators assigned on the webpage of Salto Youth (see the references at the end of the publications).
do not get ready-made answers to the questions they ask, but when they themselves seek and formulate answers and obtain feedback from and with the help of others:

- Ability to use interpersonal competences and communication techniques to de-escalate conflict situations; work with, and not against or around, the resistance of participants;
- Skills to recognize, to intervene and to react upon witnessing or experiencing discrimination and violence;
- Ability to prepare and implement activities with focus on accessibility and inclusion (issues) (e.g. activities adapted to the participants’ needs and abilities);
- Ability to create safe spaces for development, play, relaxation, and regeneration;
- Ability to take care of one’s psycho-physical condition (e.g. to prevent burnout, maintain balance, and create time for regeneration);
- Using tools to improve one’s competences as a trainer, including: autoreflection, feedback, peer supervision and group counseling, hospitalization, self-evaluation tools, and stress management techniques;
- Ability to exchange ideas and cooperate with other people engaged in supporting empowerment processes.

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the goals, principles, and tools of emancipatory and empowerment education;
- Understanding concepts related to gender and intersectionality;
- Knowledge of the developmental psychology of girls* and young women*;
- Knowledge of the legal framework for working with children and young people;
- Understanding the processes of building identity, social categorization, and stereotyping;
- Knowledge of the mechanisms of stereotyping and discrimination;
- Knowledge about discrimination at its interpersonal, intergroup, and systemic dimensions/levels;
- Knowledge about feminism and women’s human rights;
- Historical knowledge, related to the feminist movement with its various currents and internal debates, the movement for the rights of LGBTQ+, etc.;
- Knowledge about gender-based violence (scale, types, forms, law, support and assistance systems for victims of violence) – including violence against children/girls*, women* with disabilities, women* with the experience of migration, refugees, non-cis-heteronormative and non-binary people, etc.;
- Contacts to and knowledge of professionals, institutions, and organizations where girls* and young women* can find (legal, psychological, and financial) support.

The above-mentioned competences have a practical dimension. Some of the existing competence models for educators are equipped with self-assessment tools. You can find them, for example at: https://www.salto-youth.net/rrc/training-and-cooperation/trainercompetencedevelopment/trainercompetences/ and in “Antidiscrimination Education. Trainers’ Manual.”

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* The stages of developmental psychology of girls* and young women* have been explained in detail in “Empowerment Education Curriculum”, Chapter 2.1 Developmental Psychology, the Framework of Girls* Empowerment Work.
In this chapter, we propose a training program that allows us to acquire some of the competences referred to in the previous chapter.

The training program for empowerment educators should contain both elements characteristic for courses for newcomer trainers who want to work with youth or young adults, and issues that increase competences in the field of empowerment and counteract discrimination and violence based on gender and other identities.

In the creation of this proposal, we rely on the experience gained in training programs such as the Autonomia’s Foundation WenDo Training Academy (Akademia Treningu WenDo fundacji Autonomia), the Training for the leaders of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Campaign (international campaign initiated in 1993 by Center for Women’s Global Leadership at Rutgers University as a advocacy tool for ending GAVI), the “Nobody is Born with Prejudice” (”Nikt nie rodzi się z uprzedzeniami”) educational cycle for multipliers, and the Anti-Discrimination Education Academy (Akademia Edukacji Antydyskryminacyjnej), etc. All Training of Trainers (ToT), except the last one, have been conducted in Poland by the Autonomia foundation.

ToTs basic programme includes, but is not limited to the following elements/modules:

- Improving competences in interpersonal communication;
- Pedagogical approaches and teaching methodologies with children, young people, and adults;
- Dynamics of group processes;
- Research on expectations and needs;
- Training methods and techniques;
- Facilitation;
- Coping with challenging educational situations;
- Building a program/agenda;
- Evaluation.

ToT aiming towards empowerment work should analyze and implement all the above-mentioned elements with an empowerment, anti-violence and anti-discrimination perspective. In addition, in order to extend the program with elements related to the concept of empowerment, gender, violence and discrimination, this also includes preventing and counteracting these forms of human rights violations.

**Aim**

The aim of Training of Trainers (ToT) is to prepare for professional and independent educational and social work in the field of empowerment, counteracting violence and gender-based discrimination, which is mainly against women* and girls* (including those belonging to marginalized groups). It is worth noting that ToT does not provide therapeutic activities.

**The Group**

No more than 20 persons should participate in a ToT program at the same time and there must be one teacher for every 10 participants. The training needs to be conducted by at least two trainers. It is possible, of course, to include more trainers and experts as long as the rule of the presence of “school supervisors” (people who care for consistency, continuity, and group process) is respected.

The composition of the group is very important. The group ought to be as diverse as possible in terms of intersectionality and ensuring accessibility.

For example, so far ToT on WenDo or anti-discrimination held in Poland were free of charge, which reduced the barrier related to economic status. During the process of promotion and recruitment for the WenDo Training Academy, it was ensured that among the participants there were people from different parts of the country, people who belong to or have experience in working with various marginalized groups, e.g. people using Polish Sign Language, people speaking Russian, citizens of Russia and Belarus, transgender people as well as people with various dis-abilities.

**Staff**

Those who are conducting ToT must have both graduated courses for trainers and be prepared to conduct ToT. They need to be certified and be able to confirm their care for the development of competences and supervision. They also should have relevant experience in implementing what they are teaching. A membership in trainers’ and feminist organizations and groups can be an added value as well.

**Form**

A ToT must take place exclusively, or almost exclusively, in a live (in person) format. Thus far, there are no positive examples of implementing ToT in exclusively remote formats, especially if the participants of the ToT have no previous relevant training.

The D. Kolb’s learning model is recommended. This is a cycle that begins with experience, then goes through the stage of reflection, analysis, conclusion and ends with application (Kolb, Kolb 2013).

As part of the training, participants should have the opportunity to take part in exercises using various active methods, lectures, discussions, screenings, and meetings.

Various forms of engagement on the part of the participants are also necessary. They should influence the course and make use of their own competences, which requires creating a safe and respectful space for the ToT. The contributions of the participants include individual work, preparation of presentations and papers, preparation of actions and activities in a public space, and implementation of the final workshop.

**Duration**

The review of comprehensive trainers’ courses for empowerment and anti-discrimination trainers (including feminist self defense ToT) as well as the standards of the competences of trainers (SToD – Non-governmental Organisations’ Trainers Association in Poland) show that such a training should not be shorter than about 200 training hours (the WenDo Training Academy includes 370 hours of workshops, lectures, exercises, discussions, presentations and screenings carried out during 11 training sessions; the Anti-Discrimination Training Academy includes 340 hours of which 250 hours are collective workshops).

**Key modules and the scope**

The following exemplary program presents general trainers’ competences and those related to empowerment separately. In practice, each training module fulfills several goals simultaneously – combining the improvement of classic trainers’ competences with competences in the area of empowerment and of counteracting discrimination and violence.

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I. Specific empowerment modules:
- Feminist self-defense workshop (or its elements);
- Anti-discrimination workshop (or its elements);
- Gender awareness workshop (or its elements);
- Empowerment work with breathing, voice, and body;
- Training on gender-based violence, its prevention, and counteracting;
- Herstory and basic workshop on human rights;
- Specifics of working with girls* and teenagers*;
- Working with girls* and young women* with various types of disabilities;
- Working with girls* and young women* of different ethnic and national origins, from different religious or non-religious groups.

II. General modules:
- Interpersonal training;
- Group process and its dynamics;
- Training in communication and facilitation skills;
- Research on educational and development needs;
- Building a program and its evaluation;
- The role of the trainer and the trainer’s ethics;
- Tools for improving the trainer’s competences;
- Social change and commitment to empowerment.

A ToT should be completed with a supervised empowerment workshop led by two participants of TOT (see chapter 3, „Basic Program/The Group“).
In the following chapter we will introduce examples of ToT programs, of Garance ASWh., and of Autonomia and the training program for interns at Mädchentreff “Zimtzicken” (girls' empowerment centre) of the Autonomes Frauenzentrum Potsdam e.V.

4.1 Garance’s training of trainers in feminist self-defence

The ToT focuses on the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for the facilitation of feminist self-defence (FSD) workshops. In addition to practical skills in facilitating and self-defence, the participants work on topics such as gender, intersectionality, violence and safety/security; body and embodiment; emotions, resilience and recovery; mental preparedness; reflection and self-care; the legal context; support services for survivors; and working conditions of FSD trainers.

Garance applies the principles of feminist psychopedagogy. Therefore, we prioritize group work, critical thinking, body work, role plays, visualisation, perception exercises; and more that allow participants to increase their self-knowledge, challenge power relations between the trainer and participants as well as within the group, and develop solidarity. The ToT program demands individual and collective reflection on lived experiences including violence, oppression, and resistance.

We apply our organisational values to ToT, i.e. empowerment, inclusion, solidarity, and participation, as well as our principles of intersectionality, transparency, reliability, and accountability.

Our ToT is comprised of three elements:
- A collective learning process consisting of 25–30 days of group training distributed over several modules throughout an 18-month period.
- An individual learning process based on individual exercises.
- A practical, on-the-job learning process through visitation and co-facilitation with experienced trainers.

The basic ToT aims at preparing trainers to work with adult women* from the general public. Trainers who want to go further can attend additional training on different aspects of feminist self-defence (e.g. verbal self-defence) or on working with different target groups, such as girls*, older women*, migrant women* and women* of color, women* with dis abilities, LGBT* people or sex workers.

In the case of training trainers to work with girls*, ToT focuses on a thorough understanding of girls’ psycho-social development and their cultures, living conditions, and experiences of violence at different ages. The trainers question their position of power as adults and their internalised adulthood to develop a supportive and ethical pedagogic posture that fosters girl* empowerment and autonomisation.

With each ToT the overall approach, curriculum, and manual are adapted and updated on the basis of past participant evaluations, trainer observations, and new facilitation tools or knowledge produced by one of our many projects.

In order to maintain and further develop our trainers’ knowledge and know-how and to provide them with a space to share their experiences and find support, we organise one further training day per quarter. Each Garance trainer participates in at least two training days per year to keep up with the evolution of FSD.

4.2 Training program for interns at the Mädchentreff “Zimtzicken” (girls’ empowerment centre) at the Autonomes Frauenzentrum Potsdam e.V.

Requirements for an internship

Young women* who are training to become a social worker or study social work can complete an internship at Zimtzicken. These internships usually last from 3 to 5 months and offer a reliable framework for reflection and supervision in and outside of Zimtzicken.

We use the following guidelines within our training program with interns:
1. The intern writes a short application addressed to the "Autonomus Frauenzentrum Potsdam eV" or directly to "Zimtzicken".
2. We get to know the applicant during the team meeting. Key criteria are motivation, curiosity about something new, and the willingness to self-reflect with regard to one’s own socialization as a girl* and woman*. We particularly ask the prospective intern what leisure activities and hobbies they have and which activities they especially enjoy. This question is important because social workers or employees who do empowerment work with girls* will most likely show the best results in motivating girls* to do activities which they themselves enjoy and gain strength from.
3. If there is mutual sympathy and agreement on the circumstances regarding the work and working hours, the intern can start the internship on a chosen date.
4. The team of employees decides who will be responsible for the supervision of the intern.
5. The first day of the internship begins with a warm welcome by the team. The intern signs a confidentiality agreement and a briefing on their own supervisory responsibilities, fire safety regulations and safety rules in handling tools. The intern also receives an introduction to the rules of the meetings held at “Zimtzicken”.
6. Once a week, the intern has a guidance meeting with their supervisor. A training plan is drawn up at the beginning. Depending on the tasks the intern has with regard to their training or studies, the time of the internship is divided into different phases. In addition, the trainee's personal goals of what they want to achieve during the internship are defined. These can be specific competences that the intern would like to develop or new experiences that they would like to make.
7. Contents of the internship and requirements for the employees/staff members:
   a. Participation in all professional activities, according to the professional objective.
   b. The staff members make their own actions transparent and explain them.
   c. The staff members give the intern the opportunity to gradually take over all the work that the intern feels confident with.
   d. The intern should have the opportunity to work independently, while still remaining in a trainee position and should only be responsible for looking after the target group upon clearly agreed terms and times.
4.3 WenDo Training Academy (WTA) Program at Autonomia

The WenDo Training Academy is a comprehensive ToT that prepares professional and independent trainers and social workers in the field of prevention and countering gender-based violence and discrimination — mainly against women* and girls*. This ToT is aimed at people with experience of life as a woman and socialization to the role of a woman, including groups at risk of violence and intersectional discrimination. At WTA, it is our position that if you would like to be a WenDo trainer, you need to have experience living as a woman or girl.

The WTA program is based on the principles of critical, emancipatory pedagogy, the pedagogy of the oppressed, and on feminist perspectives. Diversity, intersectionality, and accessibility are also fundamental principles.

WenDo self-defense and assertiveness for women* and girls* is the only method of self-defense in Poland that takes perspectives of gender and feminism into account. It supports participants in defending their boundaries effectively, in developing assertive communication, and in resisting discrimination and violence.

General content of the WenDo Training Academy consist of the following topics/modules:

- Gender based violence and discrimination and intersectional perspective;
- Other forms of violence in the context of women’s* rights and feminist perspective (definitions, types of violence, law, support and assistance systems for victims of violence, and language in action against violence);
- Violence against specific groups: children, women* with disabilities, elderly women*, Romani women*, refugees and migrant women*, non-heteronormative women*, and a gender or gender-non-binary people;
- Reflection on one’s own experiences with violence and resistance;
- Empowerment methodology and WenDo;
- Elements of anti-discrimination and gender-sensitive workshops;
- Elements of the history of women’s* emancipation;
- Consent;
- Body work and voice liberation;
- Self-defense techniques;
- Interpersonal communication;
- Tools for the de-escalation of conflict situations;
- Assertive behavior;
- Role plays;
- Basic relaxation techniques;
- Visualizations;
- Differentiation of the content of the workshops, taking into account the diversity of participants (WenDo for girls*, women* with disabilities, etc.);
- The role of the trainer in empowerment education, ethics, and tools for improving competences.

WTA consists of 370 hours of workshops, lectures, exercises, discussions, presentations, and screenings carried out during 11 training sessions (a training session consists of 3 to 6 days of workshops, often devoted to a specific topic). WTA incorporates solutions supporting empowerment as well as the use of the participants’ resources and their impact on the program. Between training meetings, participants take part in networking meetings, visit classes conducted by experienced trainers, and carry out their own activities, e.g. as part of the Campaign “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence”.

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The project is implemented by Autonomia from Cracow/Poland (leader organisation), Autonomes Frauenzentrum/Maechtigentreff ‘Zimtziicken’ from Potsdam/Germany and Garance ASBL from Brussels/Beit.

The project’s main goal is to contribute to more inclusive societies based on equity and equal opportunities for girls* and young women*, including those from minoritized groups. We believe that empowering processes can help them resist oppression, play a more active role in society, and change the world.

We plan to achieve this goal by promoting and developing high-quality empowerment education for girls* and young women* (13–22 years old) through empowerment centres for girls* and young women*, feminist self-defense, and other formats.

Throughout the project, we learn a lot from each other and about international cooperation. We participate in study visits, training of trainers, and workshops.

Through our transnational cooperation, we have created an “Operating Model for Girls’ Empowerment Centres” (O1), an “Empowerment Education Curriculum for Girls* and Young Women*” (O2), a “Competence Model and Training Program for Empowerment Educators” (O3), and finally “Model of Girls’ Empowerment – Standards and Recommendations” (O4), which measures effectiveness and indicates policy solutions to make our goal of implementing girls’ empowerment achievable.

We hope that these tools will be useful in a wide variety of communities and countries and can be implemented and multiplied in smaller and larger European cities.

The project embraced three partner organisations, three stakeholders committees, 60 trainers, and as many young girls* and women* in the age range of 13–22, representing minoritized and disadvantaged groups, as was possible during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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