

Workshops Insights from Slovenia

As part of the *Women Voices* project, my colleague and I prepared two workshops. One was for the staff at the Maribor branch of the **King of the streets** Association, and the other for Roma women. They are already part of an existing women's group, where Roma women meet with our social workers, talk about their lives, children, labours, health problems and so on. In the past 8 years we created a safe space for Roma women to talk, to feel excepted and welcoming.

During the preparation phase, we had quite a few concerns—who would even attend the workshops, who would agree to participate in the project, and how to best present the project and its core idea, which is really made for *our* women. How to explain everything in a way that would be clear, understandable, and engaging for them?

We scheduled the workshop for Roma women during the week of International Women's Day and invited them to a slightly different kind of gathering. It felt important to create a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere: we decorated the table with flowers, fruit, pastries, juice, and coffee, and arranged cards (visual materials—we used Mother nature cards) that we chose to work with in this session.



Working with the cards turned out to be very effective—even those who struggle with expressing themselves were able to find the right words through the images and describe what they wanted to say. Due to difficulties in understanding complex concepts or words in Slovene (as their mother tongue is Romani), we adapted the workshop to ensure it was understandable for everyone.

We highlighted themes such as home, family, and safety. All the women associated safety with family and emphasized how important it is that the family is safe and feels secure. Many expressed fears about what could happen to them on the streets and shared that they no longer feel safe in many public spaces. At the end, we presented the project, and every single participant was happy to confirm that they would like to take part.



The second workshop, for the staff members, took place in April. We decided to condense everything into a single day, as scheduling multiple sessions would have been challenging. Again, we used visual materials—Dixit cards. The structure of the workshop was as follows: first, everyone chose one or more cards that spoke to them, then described the card and shared something about themselves. After that, we introduced the project, and then we split them into two groups to reflect on group agreements. Together, we wrote down the group agreements and displayed them where everyone could see them.

We also talked about the *Visual Voice* method, used the cards to discuss the theme of safety, and then gave them a task—a “photo hunt”—with 45 minutes to complete it. Everyone participated and had no issues with the task. We agreed that within a month, they would send the photos they wished to contribute, along with accompanying text.

All participants agreed on the importance of having more frequent conversations about these topics—since it’s easy to fall into work routines, it’s essential to remain empathetic and understanding towards our users. They also pointed out that women, that experienced homelessness, face many more obstacles than men—they are more vulnerable, more exposed, they menstruate and can get pregnant. That’s why this project is especially important—it brings women and their voices to the forefront.

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