

Black and White – Here we are!

Introduction and details of the project

More and more new immigrants arrive in Hungary every year from all over the world. Still, however, the national media do not seem to sufficiently and accurately concentrate on current issues of migration. Hungarian society is certainly not informed enough on the number of African immigrants, their reasons for emigration, and their life in Hungary and in the European Union. In the 1970s and 1980s hundreds of African students received state-financed grants to study in Hungary, and many of them chose to stay in the country, and they work to intensify cultural and economic relations between the two regions to this day. They help us provide appropriate means to review the lives of Africans living in Hungary and they show individual fates and prospects of those coming to the European Union. Many immigrants work at health institutions and NGOs, and many of them are members of non-profit organizations that aim to help the ill and the poor living in Africa. The primary aim of our project is to thoroughly inform Hungarian society at large about the African immigrants living in the country, therefore, encouraging the openness and stereotype-free thinking of the society in general, and the youth in particular. As this latter group will be affected by the phenomenon the most, we intensively communicate with students of high schools, colleges and universities. As part of the project, we have published two publications focusing on issues related to immigration and *Afrika Tanulmányok*, Hungary's only Africa Studies journal – which we publish four times a year since 2007 – has also come out with a special issue about the aspects, trends and processes of migration. With these, our top priority has been to inform the future generations about causes and consequences of migration, providing an insight into positive and negative processes surrounding the phenomenon of globalization. Our interactive online game (entitled *Immigropoly* – available at <http://immigropoly.ittvagyunk.eu>) is not only a free-time activity, it has also proven to be a versatile educational tool, touching on various issues from the fields of Social Sciences in general, and Sociology, Psychology, History, Cultural and Ecopolitical Studies in particular. These may provide students with useful background knowledge and may also initiate further important discussions among them.

The main task of the project was the development of the aforementioned game, *Immigropoly*. The work started with the necessary primary and secondary research on African migration trends and the main factors affecting emigration from the African continent. These contained many

historical, sociological, economic and personal-emotional elements. The research focused on the stories of African immigrants and the ways they arrived and integrated. As part of the process, we issued national polls to students of secondary schools and universities, the questions in these mainly concerned migration tendencies. We also recorded interviews with African immigrants living in Hungary and professionals working for NGOs that deal with related issues. The research phase was followed by the evaluation of the polls and then we began digitalising the information, and the work on providing an exciting appearance, with maps, photos, interview extracts and diagrams. This phase also included detailing modern and effective communications methods to effectively promote information of our knowledge base and the information newly gathered during the research phase. Related to these information, we went on by creating the design elements and primary logic of Immigropoly. In the online game, players are able to choose from realistic immigrant characters, from separate regions of the African continent. Several routes are available to choose from, on which users can guide their characters towards Hungary or other parts of the EU, where they take part in successful integration processes. The unique characters are products of fiction (as well as several other elements in the game's stories), but the illustrated trends, tendencies, routes and character-types are based on real life-stories. During the game the players receive pieces of information that help them answer the quiz questions popping up all along the route. At the cities and towns the characters visit, interesting facts and figures are provided about the policies and histories of the countries and also about migration-related regulations of the European Union. The user-experience is further enhanced by videos, photos and narrations, which enable the user to 'learn while playing'.

Our project proved to be fruitful in reducing the mistrust immigrants have to face. The multimedia online game and publications successfully reached the young target group and provided information that can effectively combat discrimination and xenophobia and give an insight into the processes of international migration and integration. We are now working to enhance the online game and develop a global migration game that covers all major migration routes leading towards the EU, including the ones chosen by European, Asian and South-American immigrants. Further gaming experience is provided by interactive dialogues, intriguing storylines, different types of tasks and quizzes – all-connected to the topic of migration in the European Union.

The presentations, conferences and the media coverage provided information on African migration trends, and also generated new research, professional discourse and introduced the topic to public discourse. Our communications strategy included a vast media support besides promoting Immigropoly, also including presentations and campaigns at secondary schools, universities and scientific conferences. We tried to change old stereotypes – typical for the majority of the society – coming up when referring to immigrants, especially if they come from Africa. Our project aimed to put information on African migration trends into a context of ecological, economic and social relations.

Financing

Apart from our own contribution and resources, financial support to the project has been provided by the European Integration Fund and the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice (in the latest phase: the Ministry of Interior) on a basis of 75:25 percent. The initial budget constantly grows. At the beginning it was 6,291,369 HUF, in 2001 14,407,560 HUF and in 2012 it rose to 19,857,320 HUF. All these we could obtain after successful grant applications to the Fund.

As research director, I was responsible for the project's professional-scientific validity, ensuring the credibility of empirical research and the authenticity of interactive mediation. As the company's owner and stakeholder, I concentrated on the novelty and the innovative potential of the project, and the possibility of a wide coverage for the distribution of the information (and a presumptive marketability). As a researcher in the field of Africa Studies and a university lecturer, I felt predestined to provide a successful start to this project. Therefore, I have worked hard with my colleagues to create a sustainable project that may become a future cornerstone of references in the field. I am fully committed to further development, as well as to a wider reach-out and the multiplication of potential results.