

# Belief**or**ama

## Snapshots

*Stories of Change*



Belieforama Snapshots – Stories of Change  
© 2012 CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe  
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#### Acknowledgments

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# *About Belieforama: A Panoramic Approach to Issues of Religion and Belief*

Europe's growing religious and philosophical diversity holds the potential for greater intercultural understanding but also greater conflict.

Belieforama provides an educational intervention and prevention of a growing social conflict. Through its suite of training programmes, Belieforama:

- Offers awareness of religio-cultural differences and issues faced;
- Provides an opportunity for the general population who would not necessarily go to interfaith dialogue activities to engage with others on the topic of religion and belief diversity in a secular setting;
- Brings believers and non-believers into cooperation for creating the public space;
- Develops skills for creating inclusive environments, confronting prejudice and intercultural communication;
- Builds confidence and offers support to change agents who want to find solutions in their professional and personal environments.

Educators from a variety of sectors are brought into collaboration through Belieforama (schools, universities, public authorities, community workers, religious leaders, etc.), providing a rich opportunity to create a multidimensional view of the impact of religious diversity issues on the social fabric.

Belieforama and its training programmes were created by a diverse partnership of organisations, led by CEJI-A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe.

The programmes aim to realise the positive potential of intercultural relations by engaging people across religio-cultural groups in the creation of inclusive societies.

Training participants have reflected the wide diversity of our societies including but not limited to: a variety of Christian denominations, Jews, Muslims, Baha'i, Buddhists, Sikhs, Humanists, Pagans, Atheists, Free Thinkers and Agnostics.

## *The Belieforama Evolution*

Concept development and drafting stage (2001-2004): This was the pre-funding stage in which CEJI created the concept, built the original partnership and did the fundraising needed to get the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training launched.

Trainers Handbook development and testing (2005-2007): With support from the European Commission Grundtvig Programme and the Ford Foundation, the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training Handbook for Adult Educators was published and tested through 3 train-the-trainer seminars reaching 45 people from more than 10 countries. The project won the 2008 Gold Award for quality in adult education from the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme.

Evaluation and Dissemination (2007-2009): A further 2-years funding from the European Commission Transversal Programme and Ford Foundation allowed for an external academic evaluation of the integrity and impact of the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training Programme while continuing to train new trainers (120 from 15 countries) and explore potential mechanisms for sustainability. The evaluation results were overwhelmingly positive across a variety of sectors, showing that a majority of participants found it to be a unique and enjoyable experience that has practical reverberations in their personal and professional lives.

Sustainability and Innovation (2009-2012): With 3-years support from the European Commission Grundtvig Programme and co-financing from the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations and the Open Society Foundation, the Belieforama Community of Practice, now reaching 250 members, is nurtured along with the development of an internal certification process, new thematic training modules and the publication of a Policy Brief entitled: "Learning from Experience, Leading to Engagement for a Europe of Religion and Belief Diversity." In 2011, Belieforama wins the first prize from the BMW Group for Intercultural Commitment.

Growth - Quantity with Quality (2012 and beyond): Belieforama continues to provide an organisational mechanism to support educators in reaching larger quantities of people with a guaranteed quality programme.

## *The Belieforama Community of Practice (CoP)*

The Belieforama CoP is a connected group of practitioners who work and learn together around the topic of religion and belief diversity over an extended period of time. We operate on the basis of shared experience of the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training Programme, joint commitment to inclusive environments, spontaneous interaction, and mutual development.

The Belieforama CoP gathers professionals and activists who embody a wealth of knowledge and experience. It provides a forum where ideas are generated towards the common pursuit of solutions through training/gathering sessions which can be conducted online or in person.

## *Thematic Seminars within Belieforama*

1.	Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination
2.	Overcoming Antisemitism
3.	Overcoming Islamophobia
4.	Reconciling Religion and Gender in Migration
5.	Reconciling Religion and Sexual Orientation
6.	Taking Action
7.	Facilitating Religious Diversity

## *Awards and recognition*

The quality and achievements of Belieforama have been recognised in two prestigious awards:

\* Gold Prize Winner for quality in adult education from the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme (2008)

\* First Prize Winner for Intercultural Commitment by the BMW Group (2010).

## *Belieforama Training Process*

In the Belieforama training, participants engage in a series of activities connected through a structured, yet flexible, pedagogical process using intercultural learning methods. With highly interactive and participative activities, participants learn from each other with the guidance of the trainers (who use facilitating methods).

The objectives of the course are:

- To raise participants consciousness of the uniqueness of each individual's religious and belief identity.
- To facilitate dialogue and sharing of experiences in the area of religion, belief and culture.
- To increase participants understanding of the concepts and issues related to religion and belief diversity.
- To be able to recognize contemporary manifestations of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination related to religion.
- To develop an appreciation for the complexity and richness of religion and belief diversity.
- To develop individual skills and institutional strategies for creating inclusive intercultural environments.

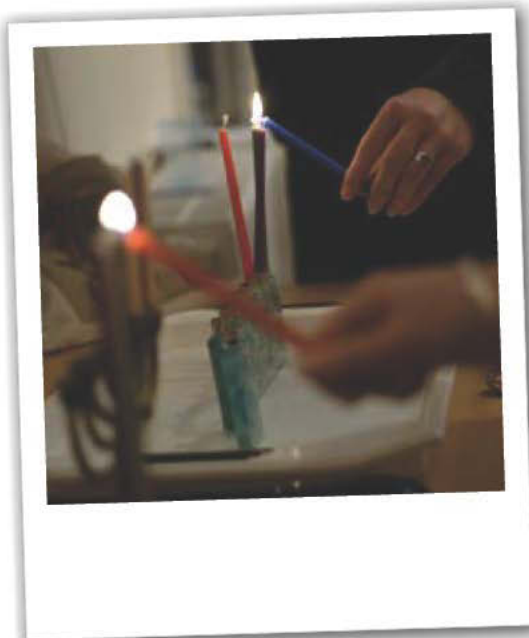
The pedagogical process is based upon significant research in the field that cites the following as key skills to develop in the prevention and unlearning of prejudice and discriminatory behaviours: empathy, self-esteem, critical thinking, cooperative learning, high expectations, diverse environments, and social action. The Belieforama Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training Programme has been an experimental adaptation of the anti-bias diversity training approach of the Anti-Defamation League's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute, following a sequence of pedagogical concepts:



Source: Working document "Belieforama training process, the content & didactic flow", Catalina Quiroz, ICA, Spain

The pedagogical process passes through the following steps:

1. Building the Foundation - How do we assure a safe, respectful mutual learning-experience in an interactive environment?
2. Identity - How does our identity take shape and impact our experiences and interpretations of our daily interactions?
3. Cultural Awareness – What do we know and don't know about religion and belief traditions that are different from our own? What skills do we need to succeed in diversity without having a wealth of knowledge?
4. Examining Issues - How do we recognize our own and others' prejudices and discriminatory behaviours within the context of social dynamics and the institutions and cultures within which we live?
5. Confronting Issues - How resilient and capable are we when confronting personal, institutional & cultural patterns?
6. Social Action - How effective and efficient could our actions be to see the change we need?



Snapshot by Stéphanie Lecesne

## *Snapshots – Stories of change*

The Belieforama snapshots are case studies – stories of change showing how individuals from all walks of life integrate the learning from Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination training into their personal, professional and communal lives.

These case studies aim to offer inspiration and practical ideas showing that it is possible to find creative, innovative and effective strategies to live and work in religious diversity and be active change agents in creating more open and inclusive environments.

*“The presentation of real case studies of effectively-led actions would be the most helpful. This would help participants to visualise the possibilities for making a change. People were energized by site visits, the interfaith centre, community services etc. but how does one initiate such projects? What are the first steps? The concrete sharing of experience could help.”*

Anonymous, Social Action & Facilitation Skills questionnaire

This publication presents more than 50 stories of change collected from Belieforama Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training participants. The sharing of good practice was done via diverse tools to ensure maximum response rate and trainee participation. The stories were compiled from the below mentioned sources :

1. *Belieforama Policy Brief Survey*, Mar-Jun 2012
2. *Social Action & Facilitation Skills Questionnaire*, Feb 2012
3. *Snapshot Survey*, Feb-Sep 2012
4. *The E-Valorisation of Religious Diversity Training* external evaluation report, Nov 2009
5. *Reconciling Religion, Gender in Migration*, evaluation report, May 2011

The following 56 snapshots present stories of both personal and social change resulting from the trainees' engagement with opportunities of transformative learning.

The 'social action' aspect of the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination training (i.e. what action and activities the trainees have taken/are going to take to contribute to the creation of more inclusive societies) is well presented in most of the snapshots to give concrete examples for the new generation of trainees to get inspiration from and to show the scope of the impact of the training programme.



The Belieforama Snapshots are stories of change on how individuals from all walks of life integrate the learning from Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination training into their personal, professional and communal lives.

*"Stories are the creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact."*

Robert McKee, Fulbright Scholar, Screenwriting Lecturer



Snapshot by Freddy Birkle

# Learning transfer into workplace

*a facilitator and trainer   new methodologies   new materials around faith and beliefs*

*immerse myself in the lives of the others   human rights as a common basis   positive*

*of religious diversity   people's thinking, attitude, daily routine   look beyond, question*

*and anti-discrimination training   more sensitive   more cautious around stereotyping a*

*individual identity   spirituality and religion   a large impact   more confident   being*

*awareness, questioning, the fight against prejudice and learn not   only with our hearts*

*had never questioned before   capture the uniqueness of each religion   greater sens*

*and cultures*

## Multi-level change & action

*awareness through education, discussion and debate, with respect   a transformative*

*is key to any religious or humanist tradition   new lines of solidarity   beautiful exper*

*everyone can learn from everyone, and even young people have a lot to teach, if th*

*openness towards both oneself and others   respecting difference*

## Communi

**practices** *challenging discrimination and stereotyping new skills as  
chief momentum on-going commitment interfaith dialogue wonderful new ideas  
the view of diversity european experience added value huge insights more aware  
and seek explanation for people's behaviour opened up my mind religious diversity  
any type of religion*

## **Educational multiplication**

*passionate the heart of many social debates in Europe reflection, introspection,  
and but with our emotions confronting tough questions question the subjects that I  
activity and empathy for people reflection and dialogue with people of diverse faiths  
confidence to share knowledge put into perspective my own prejudices raising  
the experience understand and accept others acknowledging our shared humanity  
experience of sudden and strong solidarity among people from very different backgrounds  
they are taken serious challenging situations enriched personally and professionally*

**unity initiatives** *releasing a potential for creative co-operation*

## Valerie Russel Emmott

United Kingdom

Snapshots survey

“For me, the RDAD programme has opened my eyes even further to the beauty and the complexity of living in modern European societies and having a religious life. I have acquired a greater understanding of others' personal journeys, including coping with and challenging discrimination and stereotyping. I have made friends and colleagues from among the participants in the programme over the years.

Through my on-going involvement with CEJI and in delivering the RDAD programme (and the ‘Overcoming Anti-Semitism’ programme) I have grown and developed new skills as a facilitator and trainer, and been exposed to new methodologies. On a communal level, I am sure these programmes contributed to my getting involved with a local Jewish-Muslim initiative, Salaam Shalom Media, as well as my on-going roles on the Bristol Inter Faith Group and the Bristol Multifaith Forum. I also support my synagogue as its interfaith representative. In the workplace, I have developed new materials around faith and belief and the UK Equality Act 2010, which has been given some momentum to my prior work with CEJI.

Finally, I consider the RDAD programme to have been an important step in my own personal faith and belief journey that has helped support my on-going commitment to, and projects in, interfaith dialogue.”

## Anonymous

Denmark

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“The training inspired me to establish Jewish Muslim network in Copenhagen and I got many wonderful new ideas for inter-faith work.”

## Anonymous

Austria

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“What did the training change?:

In private life: willingness to immerse myself in the lives of “the others”. Creation of a Speakers’ Corner in my hometown.

In my work: less instruction and more fieldwork (i.e. intercultural and interdenominational police projects with minorities).

The motto is: “We don’t have to like everything, the most important thing is that we are interested in the world of the others”.

Both in my work and in my private life: human rights as common basis.”

## Anonymous

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“The training has brought a much more positive view of diversity. The wider European experience added value has given huge insights into the cultural and legal influences that tend to constrain thinking and approaches”.

## Anonymous

### Bulgaria

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“After the Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training, I have become generally more aware of religious diversity and how religion or belief influences people’s thinking, attitude, daily routine, etc. Now I often look beyond, question and seek explanation for people’s behaviour also through the prism of religion/belief”.

## Anonymous

### Bulgaria

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“I really didn’t have that good understanding before [...] it did help me to understand how close the main religion, beliefs are the humanistic movements are also. [...] Religion was a little vague and distant for me [...]. This course opened up my mind and helped me see what people seek in religion”.

## Anonymous

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“The Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training helped me to become more sensitive about these issues. Or... more in terms of being a bit more cautious around stereotyping any type of religion and just acknowledging that every person has kind of a very individual identity with regard to spirituality and religion. On this awareness rating level it did have quite a large impact. And maybe also in terms of being more confident in addressing all these issues”

## Kévin Haddad

### 4motion – Belgium

Snapshot survey

“Being passionate for a long time about issues related to religion, beliefs, interculturalism and having done my studies in this field, I was sceptical as to how to tackle such complex issues in a different way than the cognitive and erudite, which is paradoxical since these issues affect us all and are at the heart of many social debates in Europe.

Then, I had the chance to participate in the Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination

training offered by CEJI in 2008 in Istanbul.

This training programme convinced me with the power of its learning process gradually leading to reflection, introspection, awareness, the questioning, the fight against prejudice and the transition into action. In these trainings we learn not only with our head but with our emotions, not only individually but also in contact with a diverse group, not only theoretically but also by confronting tough questions in reality.

*"On the professional level, this training gave me concrete tools to create time and space for reflection and dialogue with people of diverse faiths and cultures"*

On a personal level, the training has allowed me to question the subjects that I had never questioned before, for example: where does my image of God come from? What influence do my surroundings and my society have on my beliefs and convictions? The programme helped me discover the concrete uniqueness of each religious identity and capture the uniqueness of each religion. I developed a greater sensitivity and empathy for people discriminated against or disadvantaged in society because of their beliefs.

On the professional level, this training gave me concrete tools to create time and space for reflection and dialogue with people of diverse faiths and cultures. As a part



Snapshot by Kévin Haddad

of a project of the European Peer Training Organisation I had the chance to deliver this training in Slovenia in 2009 to young multipliers working in the field of anti-discrimination.

In my community work I also adapted some of the programme tools to facilitate the process of social change at the local level, namely “FormAction”: local actors against discrimination in Luxembourg in 2011.

## Eileen Fry

Multi-faith Center – United Kingdom

Snapshot survey

“The original five day training in which I participated was the beginning of a journey on which I am still travelling some six years later. The training gave me the opportunity to have the confidence to share knowledge that I had accumulated over the previous twelve years working in a religious diversity setting. I was one of the first to be able to experience and be involved in this unique project as a partner which has given me an insight into the breadth of religious diversity on a European scale.

The experiential facilitation methodology of the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination training allows each individual to share in a neutral space their perspectives in the wide range of religious diversity.

Over the years working with the material it has helped me to put into perspective my own prejudices and how I deal and cope with them and I have, in being a Trainer, also been able to dispel some of the myths that surround many religions. I have also felt better equipped to challenge and with an open mind realise that even if we can't agree we could try to “agree to disagree” and learn to live “side by side”.

The main impact for me is that whatever our cultures and histories we are all “human beings” and this training and the subsequent ones (Overcoming Anti-Semitism and Overcoming Islamophobia, and Reconciling Religion, Gender and Sexual Orientation) can help to make a better world in a small but influential way.

Raising awareness through education, discussion and debate, with respect, is the beginning of chipping away at the prejudices and discrimination which unfortunately lives on in the minds and actions of both people of religion and belief and also those, who like myself are on a journey, as atheists or agnostics.”

## Nahide Bozkurt

Ankara University – Turkey

Snapshot survey

“It was an excellent course. The trainers were so professional and they did their job very well. I learned a lot and I had the chance to apply it in my job of a teacher.

To meet people who are from different cultures and religions was such a great chance for me. I learned from the first hand from them. The teaching style of trainers was so

clear and wonderful.”

## Tikkho Ong

Radar – The Netherlands

Snapshot survey

“In December 2011, I participated in Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training in Madrid. This training was very inspiring. Personally I was surprised how people who seemed to be very different in their backgrounds, some very religious, some not at all, found out that had a lot in common with each other.

Because of this training I started to believe that you don’t have to be religious to be a trainer of Religious Diversity training. I am not very religious and in the past I thought I could not do such a training believing I would not have enough knowledge on religious matters. Of course it is handy to have some basic knowledge. And the best thing is to form a training couple with someone who – in my case – knows more religious matters.

This training inspired me to develop one-day ‘confronting Islamophobia’ training together with a Turkish Muslim who works for the organization ‘Muslim & Dialogue’.

I prepared background information about Islamophobia in the Netherlands (like collecting data on discrimination cases based on religious grounds and on opinion research about the extent that Muslims are accepted by the non-Muslim majority). My trainer partner prepared information on the Muslim faith.

Till now we trained two groups, a group of female Muslims and a group of professionals (like social workers, officials from a housing company and so on).”

## Daniel Cervan Gil

UNAO – United Nations Alliance of Civilizations – Spain

Snapshots survey

“My interest in the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training Programme was initially professional. At the time when I participated in the training, I was teaching World Religions to a very religiously and ethnically diverse group of students at the University of Granada. But the results of the training went beyond learning, great pedagogical approaches, and gaining insights that could benefit my students.

*“Our shared humanity is key to any religious or humanist tradition”*

The Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training offers a transformative experience. The careful selection of participants (who come from different cultural and religious backgrounds; and work in different fields) is key to this experience. As days go by, participants get deeply engaged in the process of trying to know themselves better, in order to understand and accept others.



For instance, it was very enlightening to participate in discussions with fervent Muslims and secular Humanist French fellows, around issues of religious symbols in public spaces.

These discussions led to an agreement on the basic dignity of every human being and acceptance of each other: acknowledging our shared humanity is key to any religious or humanist tradition.”

## Nina Muhe

### Germany

Snapshot survey

“After being trained as a Belieforama trainer in 2007 in Istanbul I have delivered the training many times in Germany as well as in other European countries. I am learning a lot with every training and in many ways.

Through working with our own stereotypes and those of others constantly, the eyes open more and more towards other groups and way of life. In training with young people from all over Europe I made the experience, that an atheist in Poland have similar experiences in terms of discrimination and exclusion as for example a Muslim in Germany. A discriminating majority in one place can be a discriminated minority in another. It all depends on the context and on the individual people.

*“Sharing of similar experiences of people with very different backgrounds can create new lines of solidarity”*

This helped me consider my own fixed views and stereotypes.

But I also learned in the same training, that this sharing of similar experiences of people with very different backgrounds can create new lines of solidarity: One young atheist within an activity strongly supported a religious Muslim girl's opinions, who girl's he felt was trapped by a majority of people questioning her worldviews. He knew how it felt to be surrounded by a questioning majority and to be forced to defend oneself all alone, so he strongly started supporting her. This beautiful experience of sudden and strong solidarity among people from very different backgrounds was not the only of its kind I have seen during the trainings I gave.

Another training I gave in December 2011 in Madrid was also full of such beautiful experiences that mainly happened through the mere encounter of a diversity of different people and different faiths and worldviews.

There were those young Muslim women, who through their presence, loveliness and power countered all stereotypes about them without even discussing them. There were those ‘experts’ in religious dialogue and diversity, who regardless of their many years of experience met all ‘newcomers’ and youngsters with respect, curiosity and wisdom, knowing that everyone can learn from everyone, and even young people have a lot to teach, if they are taken serious.

And there was this great co-trainer of mine, whom I had never met before, but who supported me in every easy and not so easy situation and with whom I had the chance to flexibly adapt to the needs of the people we were being trained and to even find creative new ways of presentation, that went hand in hand even in challenging situations. I have been enriched personally and professionally.”

## Dr. Jo Hale

Multifaith Center – United Kingdom

Snapshots survey

“What has particularly inspired and excited me as a Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination Trainer, is to be witness to and participatory with the opening of individuals’ consciousness towards ‘other’ that exercises from / within the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training Module are able to facilitate.

These exercises potentially facilitate reflection and emergence with regard to:

- a personal openness and honesty with self as a meaning-making individual, giving voice experience as emotional response and felt-sense, and as ‘experiencing’;
- a sense of self as changing and contextually and culturally positioned;
- self affected by and affecting others;
- the communicative and self-reflecting self;
- the development of community consciousness, finding purpose and potential for co-operative involvement and engagement;
- developing maturity and wisdom, and the potency of ‘wishing well’ as an aspect of ‘belonging’ and a more ‘global awareness’.

*“The principles upon which this module is based are essential to humanity’s current dilemma – that of awakening courageously to self-responsibility and consequence”*

In the post-modern world of diversity of selves and phenomena, where issues of human rights and the voice of the individual are of increasing concern, differences, uncertainties and the unknown are naturally met with open critique, if not downright suspicion, fear and denial. And yet open critique, accompanied by an openness towards both oneself and others, respecting difference, in the spirit of communication and releasing a potential for creative co-operation, might be seen to offer a potential generative template for both individual and societal ‘being well’ as well-being. ‘Global awareness’ provides the challenge of change and diversity of being, and releases the imagination to newness and difference.

It seems to me that the principles upon which this module and others from the series

are based, are essential to humanity's current dilemma - that of awakening courageously to self-responsibility and consequence.

Long may they be delivered, finding other form where appropriate."

## Alyieh Yegane Arani

Eine Welt der Vielfalt – Germany

Snapshot survey

"My experience is that especially dealing with religious diversity is not just very contested but also for many people in Germany it is connected with painful and fearful emotions. This leads easily to projections and stereotyping and it seems prejudice and discrimination because of religion is on the rise. But there is also very much suppression when it comes to the religious part of racism and discrimination. These issues are very crucial for the future discourse on racism in Germany, since islamophobia as well as hatred towards all as foreign religions is on the rise. Since German society is not really prepared to deal with religious diversity we need this kind of training and learning.



Snapshot by Alyieh Yegane Arani

The training provided me with excellent tools and a professional network to meet this need. Through the training I can create a safe space for a group of diverse participants which helps them to understand their own package of religious and culture condition - ing and the impact of religious stereotypes and prejudice.

I have already delivered a lot of trainings with all kinds of different groups: teachers and educators, school kids and youth, interreligious groups and employees of the administration and I know that it works.

About 8 years ago I delivered some long-term training for young representatives of different religions. The group consisted of Muslim, Jewish, Christian and atheist young adults. It was a really deep, sometimes painful but always dynamic experience for everybody participating.

Since I stayed in contact over the years with some former participants, now I can see the fruits of it, which really makes me very happy.

Some of the former participants, especially some Muslim and Jewish participants, developed to become important interreligious stakeholders in their communities and are now very active in the interfaith field. They do trainings with students of their own community to teach them religious openness and non discrimination and they organise interreligious gatherings and exchange and through all this they became really very important religious ambassadors for diversity and antidiscrimination for the whole city of Berlin.

Some of them directly told me, that it was the training which empowered them, to do all this and they thanked me. I am very proud of them. But actually which makes me the happiest is the friendship which some of the participants developed and which provides us in Berlin with a kind of informal interfaith network."

## Beate Schmidt-Behlau

DVV - Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband- Germany

Snapshot survey

"When I first started working with DVV International in the year 2002 issues on religion and faith were not on the agenda. As a coordinator of a European project looking into the issue of how adult education can reach out better to people with other than Christian faith background the issue got more of a focus inside the organisation. Many German adult education institutions working on the community level had started to address faith issues because their participants, especially those from Turkey, have a different religious background.

Becoming a partner in this European project enabled me to participate in one of the first trainings and feel the impact of the opportunity to have a very personal exchange

*"There are now plans to focus on the issue of religious diversity and to train more trainers to reach a wider impact inside the sector of adult education in Germany"*



Snapshot by Mohamed Seedat

with people of different religious backgrounds. The impact of the exercises of the training programme was especially strong because the concept is inclusive with regard to being religious or non-religious or even in between.

As a result of consultations there are now plans to focus on the issue of religious diversity and to train more trainers with the programme to reach a wider impact inside the sector of adult education in Germany.”

## Mohamed Seedat

Tameside Third Sector Coalitio

Snapshot survey

“I undertook this training to complement training that I deliver on behalf of my organi - sation around Equality and Diversity.

I have delivered one session in the summer to a group about 10 people which was well received. One participant on this training commented that after going through the process and upon reflection she felt she was inclined towards Humanism which she is now exploring. Others observed that unlike other training this provides one with an opportunity to look within the inner self before judging others. Another two sessions are planned for the autumn.”

## Daniela Kolarova

Partners Bulgaria Foundation – Bulgaria

Snapshots survey

“The Belieforama training has opened for me a new prospective about the role of Civil Society Organizations promoting a culture of peace, tolerance and human rights in Europe. The training introduced me to both the diversity of religious groups and the commonalities of people’s fundamental rights to freedom, security, dignity and fair treatment. It made me and other participants become more aware that while the variety of beliefs reflects our rich European culture, it also carries challenges.

As a facilitator, I have learned interactive means to search for common ground, to facilitate dialogue and stimulate sharing experiences. I liked that the training programme prepared the facilitator to be more sensitive while dealing with religious issues and cultural differences and at the same time to teach participants to embrace this sensitivity as well. I took from this programme how to better promote tolerance and combat discrimination at the same time.

The training and the whole programme was very important for our organization as it provided tools and interactive methods to facilitate dialogue and promote a culture of tolerance and a good will in diverse societies. We incorporated parts of this programme in our various projects.”

## Nancy Caldwell

USA / France

Snapshots survey

“When I took the training I was looking to do work with Diversity and Community dialogue.

*“Each participant has his or her voice and we as a group were able to build meaning in a context of freedom and learning”*

The training provided me with much more than tools. It provided a living illustration of the type of environment that can be constructed and maintained throughout this type of activity. Tools can be found in books and on the internet or even shared by word of mouth.

What I found most helpful was the opportunity to find myself in a “mixed” group in a climate where each participant has his/her voice and we as a group were able to build meaning in a context of freedom and learning.

Now, as I work facilitating community dialogue, I tap into that spirit as a source to nurture our growth. Thank you.”



Snapshot by Phil Henry

## Dr. Phil Henry

Multi-Faith Centre – United Kingdom

Snapshots survey

“The principles underpinning religious diversity and anti-discrimination are fundamental to our understanding of relationships of self to other. We are allowed to open ourselves up to the opportunity to see difference through experiential training workshops for which there is no substitute.

Why? Allowing ourselves to think about our own identity in context enables us to see how diversity through difference brings us back into a space where the common human values are the key to intercultural and interfaith understanding. A group of

*“This is only one example of change; I am aware of many more, from school children in multi-ethnic class settings to car workers, radicalised young people to middle aged middle England housewives, and a whole range of others in between”*



people from a variety of nations in the European Union came together 6 years ago to work on a new programme of diversity training; that group have developed a unique pedagogy through this training which impacts on people's personal and professional lives wherever it is applied.

ACOS, the conciliation service in the UK who arbitrate between unions and employers, sent 50 people to a one day RDAD awareness raising training in Derby, the result was over 90% reported positive attitudes towards difference as a result of the training and said they would take it into their working lives as mediators.

These people came to the day in the main as sceptics but went away with a completely changed attitude through the training.

Why then does it change people's attitudes and behaviours? Principally because it uses tools that all can relate to and provides social action outcomes that have practical application in professional and community settings.

This is only one example of change; I am aware of many more, far too many to mention here in the last 6 years, but they range across a huge spectrum of society, from school children in multi-ethnic class settings to car workers, radicalised young people to middle aged middle England housewives, and a whole range of others in between."

## Mark Barwick

### Human Rights without Frontiers – Belgium

Snapshot survey

"For me, building peaceful relations between faith communities is both a professional and a personal commitment.

As an NGO worker, I am aware of the temptation to view human conflicts as issues to be analysed rather than seeing the real people involved. For me personally, I have tried to be engaged to promote better understanding between religious groups in my community.

*"Looking through the lens of religious differences can help us to see as others see their world. It is also a method for building peace in our time"*

Two months after the Religious Diversity training, I went to Vukovar, Croatia, to help lead a workshop on religion, extremism and violence. Participants came from throughout the Balkans, where religious identity had indeed played a significant role in the war that engulfed the region during the 1990s. Many people remain bitter and traumatised by the war. Vukovar itself was the site of a terrible massacre in 1991.

Following my presentation, a man from Kosovo challenged publicly something that I had said, suggesting that I had been biased in my comments. As he was speaking, I remembered some of the exercises we had done during the Religious Diversity training and tried to appreciate his position.



The training prepared me for better understanding the man's experience and the community-based values that he brought to the discussion.

Looking through the lens of religious differences can help us to see as others see their world. It is also a method for building peace in our time. It has become increasingly important in the work of my organisation through skills training, building alliances with others and advocacy for a more just and a compassionate society."

## Luc Vande Walle

### Belgium

Snapshots survey

A couple of months ago I was asked to help a youth organisation on intercultural communication, belief system, racism.

They had an opportunity to send sixteen youngsters on a trip to Morocco. They selected eight Flemish boys and girls with extreme right wing sympathies (two of them were members of 'Vlaams Belang' – an extreme right wing political party) and brought them together with eight Muslim boys and girls whose parents were coming from Morocco, Turkey and Chechnya.

It was a hard process at the beginning. They had to follow four weekend preparation as a condition to go on the trip.

In short, due to various exercises from Belieforama the youngsters came to a better understanding, almost friendly partnership. The trip in itself was a great success.

The outcome was that:

- all the Flemish boys and girls are out of the Vlaams Belang/extreme right wing political party
- a Flemish girl started a relationship with a Moroccan boy from the group
- the Chechnya girl who was extreme fundamentalist in her belief accepted that others don't have to live the way she does (without changing her own attitude to life)

All the Muslim boys came up with a more advanced perception about Flemish girls (these girls are not all hookers/decadents...) with whom you can have occasional sex, drop them and then marry a good Moroccan girl your parents choose for you."

## Peter Hauser

### Police – Austria

Snapshots survey

"During our trainings on Religious Diversity we communicated and cooperated with persons of different religions, cultures, views, and had some evening-meetings with religious minorities (for example in Lisbon and Rome) that promoted the contact and

interaction, too.

Thanks to this very effective and fruitful way of training delivery I made corresponding changes in the Police seminars on Diversity, Human Rights and Ethics.

We shouldn't talk and discuss in academies many days about minorities but it is necessary to get in contact with them, too. Therefore as a trainer I usually send the participants into the "real world" and let them talk face to face (not from a hierarchical point as representatives of the State power) about the problems that minorities like homeless, beggars, gays, persons that have another religion or another view in Austria.

Usually the participants dislike such setting because it requires a lot of courage to talk to foreign people and people from completely different life-situations but if they master this difficult task and present their insights they are really happy and content.

One day, I think it was two years ago, a group came into the academy and presented enthusiastically the results of its outdoor-work from yesterday.

It goes like: "... We've chatted with a Muslim from Afghanistan. He is a refugee and lives in the refugee-camp in Traiskirchen (Lower Austria).

He is not a radical fundamentalist (1. prejudice) but he is very tolerant to our views and



Snapshot by Sati Bekyan

religion.

He is not a refugee because of economic reasons (2. prejudice) but was an English teacher in his home country, but because of his western-thinking, he was expelled from Afghanistan.

He is not a man with lower education (3. prejudice) but someone who has a university degree. We all hope that he can stay in our country...”

All these insights help to work on our prejudices that we have, and especially as a police officer it is important to avoid prejudices and discrimination.

The CEJI programme with its philosophy is now an important part of our Police training programmes. Thanks for all.”

## Sati Bekyan

### CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe – Belgium

Snapshot survey

The Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training was the first training of the type I attended. It was a great personal and professional development opportunity for me, it changed my perception of religiosity and belief, it provided me with tools to challenge biases and dogmas, most importantly it opened me up to discover my own spirituality and to talk confidently and openly about it.

*“Witnessing people changing their self perception and self-esteem over a five day training course was inspiring”*

The uniqueness of the course is that it doesn't simply teach definitions of religious diversity, nor does it repeat the anti-discrimination rhetoric heard everywhere. Through interactive activities and role plays, the participants are placed in situations that reveal and challenge the stereotypes and prejudices deeply rooted in them. In this way, a space is created for open discussion and debate around these issues. In fact, the RDAD course goes beyond religiosity to encompass broader ideas around belief and spirituality in a powerful way.

Already on the second day of the training I found myself sharing openly with people I'd never met the life experiences that had shaped me as a person. I particularly enjoyed the “Rites of Passage” activity.

The discovery that there are so many things uniting religious and non-religious people with different walks of life was empowering. Witnessing people changing their self perception and self-esteem over a five day training course was inspiring.”

## Aysun Avdjiev

### European Parliament Information Offices – Bulgaria

Snapshot survey

**“In my day-to-day job I very often use the methods I have learned at the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination training programme.**

I’m the coordinator of the local offices in Bulgaria for the Member of the European Parliament Mr. Metin Kazak. A total of four offices are located in different regions of Bulgaria. We visit the offices on a regular basis for different activities.

Bulgarian citizens with different ethnic backgrounds live in the cities where our offices are located. Next to Bulgarians there are Turks, Roma, Pomaks, Vlachs, Kizilbash etc. They are diverse both ethnically and religion wise. Bulgarians and some Romas are Orthodox-Christians, Turks, Pomaks, and some Romas are suni-muslims, whereas some of the Bulgarians and Ulahlar are Catholic-Christians and the Kizilbash’s are sii-muslims.

In this wide range of ethnic and religious pool we are working every day with different people. We celebrate together their traditions and we respect each others ‘special religious days.

We organize different seminars related to our work in different fields: e.g. civil society organizations, schools, municipalities, authorities and institutions. Sometimes, even more so in recent years, especially among young people we encounter prejudices against the Romas, Turks and Muslims. In these cases, I’m very often using the techniques that I have learned at the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training. Putting into practice the huge arsenal of tools that the training equipped me with I get to know these diverse communities I encounter and better understand the other’s culture, life-style, learning. This involvement and work with diversity brings forward the realisation that every human being is the same and other religions share the same human values. All of these factors help me to overcome judgments and bad images.

The world is every day moving rapidly towards globalization. In developed countries, the proportion of foreigners is increasing quickly. They are contributing to their new countries both in terms of economics and cultural power. This trend is certain and irreversible.

Thus, we have to put forward a new philosophy i.e. difference will create strength, success, joy and prosperity.”

## Pierre Etienne Vanpouille

### France

Snapshots survey

**“Being responsible for a school, the need to mobilize dynamic resources to cope with the situation of intolerance growing with diversity, seemed to me particularly urgent. Some of the students influenced by tensions and fears of adults and parents adopt not very open attitudes and behaviours to the values, cultures and beliefs of “others”.**

*"People don't come out the same from this training, they become stronger, more equipped and freer in their own commitments and beliefs, and definitely they become more empowered and able to lead similar actions in their communities"*

Today we live in a society where beliefs appear tense in the reflexes of identity and community. It becomes critical to keep alive the civic dimension of the educational mission. The school approach towards the religious culture and values remains difficult and is confined to 'the teaching' that relies on a structural and impersonal approach.

It always seemed to me that the resolution of tensions relating to these issues should mobilize a relational dynamic where everyone's word is welcome and accepted. This is certainly risky and cannot take place without having security of a proven methodology.

The training programme of CEJI fully meets this requirement. The proven experience, the patient approach of mental exercises and the highly interactive and relational format makes the exercises and the experiences, lived through the training, strong.

People don't come out the same from this training, they become stronger, more



Snapshot by Aysun Avdjiev

equipped and freer in their own commitments and beliefs, and definitely they become more empowered and able to lead similar actions in their communities”.

## Ine van Emmerik

Extravaleren – The Netherlands

Snapshots survey

“In 2008, I was a participant in the RDAD training in Toulouse. What struck me most was the richness of the inner world of each and every participant. Having the time and the opportunity to speak with people from various “religious” backgrounds enables you to understand and respect the commonalities and the differences in yourself and others. I put religious between brackets, it is better to say: personal belief systems, which is sometimes religiously inspired, sometimes not.

This was a useful and inspiring experience for my work as a business consultant and coach. This experience helped me when I was invited to facilitate a workshop during a Symposium of a large hospital in the Netherlands, Isala in Zwolle.

The subject was “Rituals in care”. Especially in a hospital, there may be a tension between medical care that can be rather technical and distant, and care for the human being that is taken care of. How to deal with the different religions and belief



Snapshot by Ine van Emmerik

systems of the patients, how to be sensitive to the need for rituals in moments of life and death? Many caretakers feel awkward with this, coming from only one or often no religious background.

I integrated the RDAD- Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training activity “Rites of passage” with an activity on life stories, inviting participants to dig up their own life’s experience as a source for information to act during their work.”



Snapshot by Patricia Camisao

## Patricia Camisao

The Grail – Belgium

Snapshots survey

“After following the Religious Diversity training, along with a few other members of our international Christian women’s organization, The Grail, we organized a European conference concentrating on the themes of religious diversity, migration and women’s empowerment. This allowed us as an organization to reflect deeply on these themes in relation to our internal and external activities and develop an action plan as a result.

Now we are cooperating transnationally on a project to develop Interfaith Women’s Action for Community Development. In Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal and Italy we will



work with women from different faith traditions to survey the neighbourhood needs and generate cooperative social action”.

## Calin Glad Diaconescu

Casa Corpului Didactic Timis – Romania

Snapshot survey

I am a trainer for teachers in the field of civic and intercultural Education. The courses on intercultural education include elements about religious diversity and anti-discrimination.

After my return from Derby where I participated in Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination training, I had the opportunity to share with my trainees the experiences that I had during the training (visiting a mosque and a Sikh temple). I was able to adapt some methods learned during the training and also the knowledge about different religions and beliefs. I also wrote an article in the Journal of Casa Corpului Didactic Timis about my experience on the diversity of beliefs and anti-discrimination, acquired during training.

In general, I think that after the RDAD training my style of teaching intercultural education to teachers became more practical and more focused on the formation of competences and the ownership of specific values of dialogue and tolerance”.

## Paul Weller

University of Derby – United Kingdom

Snapshots survey

“The Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training programme has both encouraged and challenged me in working with these issues as an academic engaged in policy research on religion and belief discrimination and equality: to continue to try to keep a close articulation between personal reflection and sharing, and social engagement and action.

This is, I feel, one of the key distinctive features of this training in comparison with a number of other initiatives which tend to focus on one end or another of that spectrum.”

## The Multi-Faith Centre

University of Derby – The United Kingdom

Snapshot survey

“I, the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby began as a concept in 1992 which eventually grew into a reality. My gestation period was 12 years but it took less than 12 months to build me and I was completed and ready for occupation in September 2004. In 2005 my then Director was invited to become a partner in a European Project to develop a training manual on Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination (RDAD). In



October 2006 I hosted the very first 5 day “Train the Trainers” workshop in RDAD, the participants came from across Europe: Belgium, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Denmark, Wales and England. I was so excited and felt very privileged to play host to this new innovative and experiential training and to listen to the diverse debates and languages.

Since then I have been host to many 1,2 and 3 day awareness raising workshops and have hosted more RDAD 5 day trainings and also two Overcoming Islamophobia and Overcoming Anti-Semitism “Train the Trainer” seminars as well as being somewhere for the UK trainers to meet and discuss the, now called, “Belieforama Project” and its future developments.

I hope that with the current Director (the previous one retired in 2007) I will continue to be the venue that provides a safe neutral space for the workshops and to raise awareness of the diversity and richness of all religions and belief systems that go to make up the human race.”



Snapshot by Oana Nestian

## Oana Nestian Sandu

Intercultural Institute of Timisoara – Romania

Snapshots survey

“This programme has a great balance between giving information, offering participants the opportunity to learn from each other and, at the same time leaving enough space for uncertainty and personal exploration.

The training was for me the first opportunity to discuss aspects related to religion and belief with peers, and in the absence of religious leaders. I am involved since then in projects that address these aspects and I realize again and again how important it is to raise awareness in Europe about religious diversity and anti-discrimination, to give more and more people the opportunity to experience activities like the ones proposed by Belieforama.”

## Stéphanie Lecesne

CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe – Belgium

Snapshots survey

“Thanks to the Belieforama approach, my work became more and more inclusive with the youngsters I worked with. I noticed a big change using the Belieforama methodology. The pedagogical process is so important to build the basis of a good exchange and good relationships among the youth.

*“This training has significantly changed my view on the bridges and gateways that can be constructed to reduce stereotypes and prejudice between communities”*

During 10 years, I was a youth worker organizing youth exchanges with Israel, Palestine, France, Germany, Algeria, Spain. This happened in France, Germany, Algeria and Israel. The tools and the activities coming from the manual are great to understand and to accept the differences between religions and values. It helps a lot building bridges between youngsters.

This training has significantly changed my view on the bridges and gateways that can be constructed to reduce stereotypes and prejudice between communities.

It is also through this programme that I met people who are now friends practicing and understanding beliefs and values different from mine. Before this training in March 2007 in Sofia, Bulgaria, I had Muslim friends but none of them were veiled. I thought I was very open, I thought I would have very little bias. I had friends in almost all religions, beliefs and felt to be comfortable with that. However, my view of the Muslim veil was torn, as French, it was in opposition to the freedom of women, their autonomy, independence ... and then, during training, I met many Muslim women, and one who has completely changed my perspective. This British woman of Pakistani origin has shattered my stereotypes and my prejudices, she is a woman leader, which leads her life as a mother, grandmother, wife, employee in public administration, traveller ...

Now I can respond when I hear radical discourse “all the same” or even “all wives are subject”. Thanks to Belieforama, I’m much more open, and I no longer protect myself behind positions of ‘right’ thinking.

## Iman Moutaouakil

ICA: Institute of Cultural Affairs – Spain

Snapshot survey

Above all, the programme has allowed me to learn more about other religions. It has been a course where we dismantled the known myths and realities about the religions, especially those that are common to all faiths. Through the planned activities during the training I could see the different realities from another point of view, especially this has allowed to put ourselves in the shoes of all those people who feel discriminated against during their lifetimes.

Following this training we have established a friendship with several members of the course. With some I maintain a friendly relationship until now, and with others we did manage to organise joint projects.

## Catalina Quiroz

ICA: Institute of Cultural Affairs – Spain

Snapshots survey

After receiving the Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training of 5 days, I was able to facilitate awareness workshops. Thanks to the grant from the Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence (Ministry of Justice, Spain), we managed to organise 10 awareness workshops of two days (four hours per day).

The following snapshots (from Imane Elbakal Kassimi, Maria Teresa Martin) are the testimonies of two participants of the workshops, both held in Madrid in April and June 2009.

The testimonies given by the workshop participants speak for themselves.

For my part, on professional and personal level, to have the opportunity to interact with people involved before, during and after the training represented great value. The value was that I could see the great need and motivation of people to have opportunities for training and exchange, enabling them to discuss, discover, understand the “other” and see the possibilities of acting jointly.”

## Maria Teresa Martin

National Institute of Distance Learning – Spain

Snapshots survey

“I am Maria Teresa Martin, professor of the National Institute of Distance Learning and I collaborate as a volunteer in an organization called ‘Hermandades del trabajo’ which is in the field of Education Sciences. I am with the University for many years and I work

mainly in the field of social pedagogy and creativity.

I would like to tell about the very positive impact that the Belieforama training had on several members of our organisation who participated in it a few months ago. As we are from a Catholic organisation, most of our members belonged to Christian Catholic religious group but the rest of the training participants had diverse belief and religious affiliations.

I would like to highlight 2 points, one is the training atmosphere. The training atmosphere, in which you encounter the personal attention and the joy to meet and discover other ways to see different religions. Secondly, speaking to these people of different religions that were in the group raised our awareness about our own stereotypes and biases.

All the participants seemed to be very interested to continue to deepen their knowledge in similar upcoming trainings. Apart from the diversity of the people what I liked in the training was the interactive and intuitive methodology with which the training was delivered by Cataina Quiroz, eventually it is a methodology that makes the experience unforgettable for people participating in the training.”

## Imane Elbakal Kassimi

ICA – Institute of Cultural Affairs – Spain

Snapshots survey

“My name is Imane, I am originally from Morocco. I live in Spain for several years. I am president of an intercultural organisation which involves people of different nationalities but the majority of our members are Arab.

Me and several of my colleagues participated in Belieforama Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination training. The training caused a great impact on us because of its methodology. It brought to us a sense of peace, and reassurance in the way we were discussing amongst ourselves, when we touched the theme of the religion, that is very important for us.

Religions are often classified in a way as if they have nothing to do with each other, however during the training we realized that religions and beliefs in their essence try to touch upon the same thing which is peace, love, peaceful co-existence. All of this is said by all religions. This is the main thing that impacted us most and what we liked about the training.

The colleagues who didn't manage to attend the course, because it took place during summer holidays, asked us about the upcoming trainings. We shared with them how it went, what we learnt during the course, about all the different religious/belief groups that we learnt as we didn't know about the existence of many of them. For me personally I would like to participate once more because this is not the kind of training that you participate and feel bored.

In each such course you learn something new, because there are new people, new ideas, new feelings, you listen to new experiences and the fact that you are every time

with new people awakens feelings in you that you wouldn't express otherwise.”

## Anonymous

Social Action & Facilitation skills survey

“The tools and knowledge of Religious Diversity Anti-discrimination training helped me several times to become an “informal trainer”, as I managed to get friends of mine to realise that they have an enormous network of people they can reach to spread a message.”

## Anonymous

### Turkey

Reconciling Religion Gender in Migration training participant

“We want to start a new women platform in Koycegiz (which will offer) seminars for housewives to increase their awareness about discrimination. We will begin a project for the women who experienced violence in their family, (and do) awareness raising project between different religious or ethnic groups, like Alawi & Sunni or Kurd & Turk.”

## Anonymous

### Turkey

Reconciling Religion Gender in Migration training participant

“Women murder has increased in the last years in Turkey. They are killed by their husbands, fathers or brothers. We would like to make a research in this area. Research about the murderer in prison. What was their motive to do it? Research about the family. Research in the media how these incidences are presented.

All this research will be made from the point of view of religion and gender...”

## Anonymous

### Germany

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“Working with people from different cultures and religions, Romas, Arabs, South American people... I used everything that I learned in my work place.

With the help of RDAD- Religious Diversity Anti-discrimination training, a number of years ago I created a programme named Alif-Aleph-Alpha for young female peers of various religions and faiths. This was very successful and I am still in contact with many peer trainers that were trained at that time. Many of them are now very active in the field of tolerance and some told me that that experience was really formative for them.”

## Anonymous

### United Kingdom

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

**"I used the learning from the training in a practical way when the local public authorities were challenged by far right extremists. Members of a number of faiths and non came together and expressed their concerns in one voice."**

## Anonymous

### Belieforama Policy Brief survey

**"The training helped me with how to facilitate discussion on contentious issues (especially problems related to religions); how to solve a conflict of attitudes on the problems of religions; how to organise an information session on problems related to religion."**

## Farkhanda

### CEJI – Scotland

Snapshot survey

**"It has been an amazing journey for me, I have grown personally, made firm friends and worked with a tool which has long term affects on people's lives. It is challenging internally as well as outwardly."**

The training programme is very flexible and can be used in a variety of situations and contexts. My most memorable moments have been when participants reach a stage that they begin to see and feel each others perspectives. I have been able to deliver a two day programme to local authority colleagues. Some have been inspired to learn more and others felt that the space for self reflection was invaluable."

## Melissa Sonnino

### CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe – Belgium

Snapshots survey

**"The Belieforama training programme impacted my life both at personal and professional level."**

Going through the 5-day training programme has been an emotional journey which changed dramatically my idea of living a multicultural world.

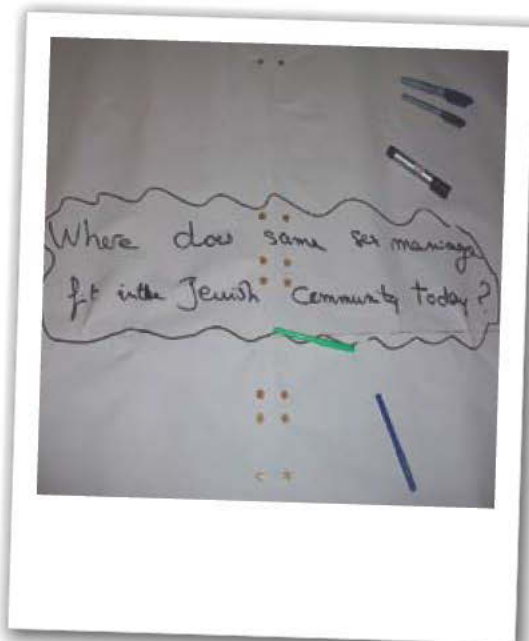
Our vision is often influenced by our community's system. The religious aspect of our life enriches us but can also represent a limit that impedes the engagement with the others, confining us in a fictitious dimension which doesn't include the diversity that surrounds us.

The Belieforama training course definitely represented for me the right incentive to open up to new challenges, gaining the tools to confront and deal with diversity in a

proactive way.

*"Going through the 5-day training programme has been an emotional journey which changed dramatically my idea of living a multicultural world."*

This experience has been vital for my work's experience afterward. I offered the Belieforama programmes activities in many occasions. I organized 1-day workshops for Jewish Communities on issues of diversity and intercultural relations in Poland and Hungary. I also tested some adaptation of the RDAD- Religious Diversity Anti-discrimination training activities during Jewish conferences throughout Europe, obtaining a great interest and attention by the participants. For example I used the "Card we're dealt" activity to further explore the diversity within Jewish Communities today."



Snapshot by Melissa Sonnino

# Personal encounters in learning

*diversity versus non-religious or non-spiritual diversity* shaped our sense of who we are

*see the things the same way* raised awareness in me of the diversity of humanity

*at the same time make a difference* switch perspectives and experience a valuable

*tolerance, inter-cultural living and where exchange of ideas takes place in a free atmosphere*

*increasing self-awareness, better understanding diversities*

## Broadening

*forms of discrimination* meet people in all their diversity intense discussions the right

*look beyond, question and seek explanation* how individuals from all walks of life interact

*personal, professional and communal lives* new friendships based on a deep respect for

*in me of the diversity of humanity* opportunity to reflect, gain insight, get to know yourself

*and experience*

## More awareness, sensitivity

*valuable opportunity* new knowledge, training and partnership with people

*in a free atmosphere* we no longer have that distance between us new sense



*we no longer have that distance between us new sense of understanding spiritual  
are new friendships based on a deep respect for our relative positions I would never  
opportunity to reflect, gain insight, get to know yourself and your community and  
the opportunity new knowledge, training and partnership with people inter-religious  
atmosphere disciplined staff as well as good comradeship be an informed educator  
ing understanding taking responsibilities for overcoming all*

*right conditions to discuss and to find serene and negotiated compromises more aware  
integrate the learning from Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination training into their  
for our relative positions I would never see the things the same way raised awareness  
yourself and your community and at the same time make a difference switch perspectives  
ty and tolerance understanding a*

*inter-religious tolerance, inter-cultural living and where exchange of ideas takes place  
of understanding spiritual diversity versus non-religious or non-spiritual diversity*

## **Oana Bajka**

**Intercultural Intercultural Institute of Timisoara – Romania**

Snapshots survey

“After the 5-day training on Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination I felt closer to people with strong religious beliefs, as well as to people who don’t focus on their spirituality. This new sense of understanding came to me during the training, as I realized that the depth and the extent of anyone’s spiritual travels are so profoundly personal, that some people even have difficulty expressing such core values. This feeling was soon translated in the way I looked at people (and still do) and in a deeper respect for people who don’t share my personal religious beliefs.

This was especially the case with my family and I am very happy I can now exchange jokes with them about how we are different, instead of being angry and not understanding each other. I love it that we no longer have that distance between us.”

## **Freddy Birkle**

**European Peer Training Organisation – Netherlands**

Snapshots survey

“It is always very difficult for me to connect a visible and tactile impact to any one event for me. However what definitely stayed in my mind after this training is the vast lack of knowledge that even informed people have, when it comes to belief systems.

The in-group always assumes orthodox attitudes and behaviours from the out-group even though within the in-group there are so many varieties. I guess it helped me understand to just be tolerant, open and respectful towards the unknown religion, not putting anyone on the spot. Everyone decides individually how he or she believes, no matter which religion they might belong to.”

## **Anonymous**

**Germany**

Belieforama Policy Brief survey

“The meaning of the religious diversity or spiritual diversity versus non-religious or non-spiritual diversity became clear to me in its whole explosiveness. For me the exchange with representatives of various beliefs and ideologies was really important and the practical approaches that were taught in the seminar are helping me a lot.”

## **Maria-Ines Arratia**

**ICA Institute of Cultural Affairs – Spain**

Snapshot survey

“This workshop gave us an opportunity to reflect on the role and relevance of religion in the course of our lives. It enabled us to share our respective trajectories and specific personal experiences and feelings about religious instruction/learning that have



Snapshot by Maria-Ines Arratia

shaped our sense of who we are and marked our relationships within families and more broadly, in society. Through this sharing across various faith traditions, we were able to better understand our diverse positions and to explore ways to communicate effectively across those differences. The openness and honesty with which we were able to talk allowed us to make new friendships based on a deep respect for our relative positions.”

## Anonymous

### Turkey

Reconciling Religion, Gender in Migration report

“I was full of prejudice about the sexual orientation of people. Through this programme I have changed my approach”

## Susanne Ulrich

CAP Academy – Germany

Snapshots survey

“After the training I really felt so much more sensitive concerning the issues related to prejudice, discrimination and religion and beliefs. I was really surprised that we had not touched the issue before. It was always there and it seemed to be a taboo. Coming from the democracy learning background I found it extremely important to focus on these hot topics. It is an area of life that is very meaningful to so many people and at the same time it is around those kinds of values and strong beliefs that people do not want to negotiate about.

It was to me a real eye-opener to see, that I could learn in that training a lot about people that I had thought to know already quite well just because we had for so many times skipped these subjects.”

## Anonymous

Belgium

Belieforama Policy survey

“I used to say that the hijab is male oppression of women, they are discriminating against. Thanks to the training I met some Muslim women – one in particular – the first time I met her she was wearing the hijab and I was like poor woman she is obliged to wear the hijab, etc. We attended the training together and when I started to speak to her and know her, all my previous values about the hijab collapsed. And I was like: this woman is one of the most open-minded and feminist women I have ever met. She told me she wore the hijab because she wants to wear it.”

## Mary Aubry

Ligue de l'enseignement du Calvados – France

Snapshots survey

“I would never see the things the same way. This exchange has not only raised awareness in me of the diversity of humanity, but also equipped me with consistent efforts and tools necessary for the coexistence with this diversity.

I know I would never have the strict judgment I had before about people practicing a religion. My view of the Israeli Palestinian conflict has also significantly changed. I used to see the things through the lens of my simplistic television screen. Now I better understand the extent of the complexity of this conflict.”

## Judith Jordaky

Switzerland

Snapshot survey

“The Belieforama training is a great opportunity to reflect, gain insight, get to know

yourself and your community and at the same time make a difference. The training allows participants to switch perspectives and experience differences and the fact that we are all human, on a very personal level. In our diverse society, where everybody should be respected and have a place, this is such a valuable opportunity.

## Bashy Quraishy

Denmark

Snapshots survey

“In my personal and professional life, I have been working with anti-discrimination, racism, anti-semitism and islamophobia for a long time.

Since the nature of discrimination in Europe has changed from being ethnic and racial to cultural and religious, I and the organisation I work with adjusted to this change. That however required new knowledge, training and partnership with people and NGOs who have been working with inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue, education and training.

Since I have worked on the issue of islamophobia with CEJI for many years, I found the training course – Religious Diversity and Anti-discrimination for Adult Educators - CEJI was offering in June 2008 - as a God sent opportunity and a good chance to further my qualification, understanding as to how the various communities can learn to understand and respect each other and how I can incorporate the learning into my own lecturing work.

The course was very well planned, with the right amount of delegates -age, religions and gender wise – both practical instructions, theoretical discussions and future oriented lessons. The location of Istanbul was so appropriate because the city is one of the most cosmopolitan in the world and houses many religions. It is also a good example of inter-religious tolerance, inter-cultural living and where exchange of ideas takes place in a free atmosphere. The useful written material was available along with a disciplined staff as well as a good comradeship was developed.

After the course, I became more aware of the importance of such courses for my educational work. I can happily recommend CEJI's seminars and courses to anyone who wants to broaden his/her horizons and be an informed educator.”

## Julie Godfroid

EPTO: European Peer Training Organisation – Belgium

Snapshots survey

“Born in an atheist family in French-speaking Belgium, I did not receive any religious education except what the society gave me. God (s) did not exist, religion was perceived as a support to the current political power and it was preferable to be initiated with the secular rites (“parrainage laïque” instead of baptism, secular celebration instead of communion, following the course of “morale laïque”). And then, I studied social anthropology. And I followed my first training with EPTO in 2004 which provided

me practical tools for increasing self-awareness, better understanding diversities and taking responsibilities for overcoming all forms of discrimination.

*"Living together is not that complicated if you're in the right conditions to discuss and to find serene and negotiated compromises"*

Nevertheless, even with experiences as trainer, I've been again confronted with my own stereotypes and behaviours towards religions during my Religious Diversity Training delivered by CEJI in 2007 in Sofia. This combination of elements did radically change the perception I had about religion and spirituality. Since then, I'm defining myself as "non-believer in God". Not "atheist", not "humanist", not "agnostic" but "non-believer in God" because I maybe do not have the conscience of God but I don't deny its existence for the others. And I know I still have other systems of beliefs. "Believing there is God or believing there is nothing is still believing". And I'm self-aware of that.

Furthermore, the best added value in cooperating with CEJI, is the opportunities given to me to actually meet people in all their diversity. How thankful am I to have met so many Jews, Muslims, Christians, Baha'is, Buddhists, Atheists of all kind and to have heard about their own personal journey. How precious it is for me to have shared a room, in a month time, with a young Jewish woman with an Iranian origin telling me how to behave during Shabbat dinner and few weeks later to be slightly awake at 5am by my Muslim roommate doing her morning prayer. How moving it has been when, after 2 days of intense discussions with teachers about how some of the Muslim men and some of the atheist women wanted to be greeted, one of the Muslim men thanked me and shook my hand even if he explicitly said he preferred not to have physical contact with a woman. For me, "Living together" is not that complicated. It's challenging, it's asking good will but it's not that complicated IF you're in the right conditions to discuss and to find serene and negotiated compromises. And that's what CEJI taught me."

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Snapshot by Julie Godfroid









## Co-ordinator



## Partners



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*"This is only one example of change;  
I am aware of many more, far too many to mention here  
in the last 6 years, but they range across a huge spectrum of  
society, from school children in multi-ethnic class set  
tings to car workers, radicalised young people to middle  
aged middle England housewives, and a whole  
range of others in between."*

*"I love it that we no longer have that distance between us."*

*"Living together is not that complicated. It's challenging,  
it's asking good will but it's not that complicated IF you're in  
the right conditions to discuss and to find serene and negotiated  
compromises."*

*"...Our shared humanity is key to any religious or  
humanist tradition."*

*"People don't come out the same from this training,  
they become stronger, more equipped and freer  
in their own commitments and beliefs, and definitely they  
become more empowered and able to lead similar  
actions in their communities."*