

European Radio Training Initiative

module 1:

CRASH

English

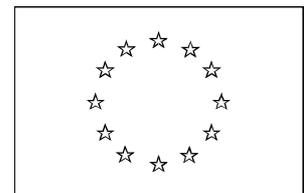
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RADIO PRODUCTION TRAINING

Module 1: Crash course

This introductory material aims to provide the very basic knowledge to individuals or specific target groups working closely with community radios. It is a trainer curriculum and checklist for Radio production crash courses. It is a flexible material that can be adjusted according to the group size, structure and background skills and the duration of the course as well.

Our experience has proven that it is normally covered within 8 to 12 hours with 6 to 8 participants per trainer. The goal is to make sure trainees are able to produce a short radio programme at the end of the course.

The main objectives of this material is the improvement of quality of vocational training, to enhance the employability of target groups, to raise their awareness about community radio as a mouthpiece of the voiceless and an alternative to the mainstream by drawing under-represented or disadvantaged sectors of communities into radio production.

Trainer's guidelines:

- self confidence, good communication skills
- warming-up exercises
- test the motivations of participants before hand: how and why they are involved in the course? What are they expecting to do with the new skills?

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction

- Presentation of the trainer, stressing his experience in the radio production field and training for community radio;
- Familiarise the participants with the context and allow them to present themselves and to talk about their respective experiences in different domains. Possibility for participants to ask few questions during the warming-up exercises is necessary and the trainer takes the opportunity to test their respective interests in radio production work.
- The trainer introduces the aim, the assumptions, the context of the course, and announces the subjects to be covered by the course.

2. Community radio

2.1. Community radio:

General concept:

Community radio is defined as having three aspects: non-profit making, community ownership and control, community participation as an alternative voices to mainstream and commercial stations. Community radio means radio in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community.

Community radios are normally owned by non- profit making groups, co-operatives, students, trade unions, universities, municipalities, rural groups, churches, and other grass roots organisations. They are financed by donations, international bodies, and owner's associations, fundraising, by listeners themselves or by governmental bodies. All voices are broadcasted without discrimination or censorship. The main aim is community building, in a context of closeness, a bridge, a step toward others beyond differences.

3. Microphones and portable recorders (75 minutes)

3.1. Devices (different types of portable recorders, brief history of different devices, advantages and disadvantages);

- DAT Recorders (digital audio tape)
- Reel to Reel Recorders
- Cassette Recorders
- Mini-disc Recorder

It's good, when applicable, for the trainer to have a sample of each portable device and accessories. So the trainees can get familiarised with advantages and

disadvantages of each. I.e. the Reel to Reel Recorder is normally heavier and bigger, because they provide rooms for tapes, which are normally big. The trainer has to make a demonstration of each: recording and listening back. It's only after those exercises that trainees can ask their questions.

3.2. Mini disc portable recorder:

For this Crash course, more details are given on the use of the minidisc portable recorder or, if asked for by the group, the cassette recorder.

3.2.1. Recording

The introduction into the use of analogical recorder contains:

insert of batteries, insert of the tape (turn to the blacktape), adjustment of microphone and headphones, explanation of the keys (Play, Record, Pause, Forward, Rewind, Eject), the batterie controll-light, dolpy function and the level. Important tips are about the distance between microphone and lips (15 cm), the microphone cable loop for noise reduction during the recording and the adjustment of the exact level 0 ((max. +3 bzw. -3).

In the last two years in lots of community radios happened a re-orientation from tape-recorders to minidisc-recorders.

The introduction into the use of minidisc-recorder explains the basic differences between digital and analogical recorders (minidisc <-> tape). Insert of the minidisc, explanation of the keys and the most important editing possibilities. Before and during the recording you have already the possibilities to edit the recordings for further use. For example, you can splice an interview into different tracks by using the pause key. This is much more practical compared to a tape-recorder. with the function key "Track Mark" it is possible to mark long tracks and for example put them in a thematically structure. another advantage, especially for people with no or less experience, that the minidisc recorders of most brands have an automatic function to adjust the right level. For beginners in the radio it is often too much to concentrate on the content and the audio quality at the same time.

The automatic adjustment of the audio level makes this much easier for the people.

The use of the microphone is the same, no matter what kind of recorder you use.

During the whole guidance given by trainers the participants use the technical equipment all by themselves. After the explanation they practise the things they have just learned in small exercises. The recorded material mustn't be longer than one minute.

HANDOUT

Minidisc Recorder

First of all, it is worthwhile to check if the battery has enough charge for the work you intend to do. Insert an empty MD by sliding the “open” button, lift the lid, and make sure the MD is in the right place before you close. Check if the microphone is well connected before you start recording.

- press and slide the “REC” (red switch on the front panel) to the right. There is a REC indicator, which lights up while recording or flash when paused.
- to stop recording, press “■” button or “pause” if you intend to resume recording (press again “||” button to resume).
- when you have pressed “■” while recording, and you like to resume from the end of the previous recording, press “end search” button and slide “REC”.
- to end recording, press “■”, open the lid and remove the MD.
- the level of the recorded sound is adjusted automatically. You can monitor the sound by using the headphones and adjusting the volume. This does not affect the recording.

3.2.2. Listening and playing back:

- insert an MD and press “▶” to play. To listen is just to plug in headphones and to adjust the volume + or - .
- to stop play, press “■”
- to pause, press “||” and press it again to resume.
- to find the beginning of the current track, press “◀◀”; to find the beginning of the following track, press “▶▶”
- to go backwards or forward while playing, press “◀◀” or “▶▶” continuously up to the desired position.
- to terminate, press “■”, slide “open”, lift the lid and remove the MD.

3.3. Microphone

The microphone collects sounds from an external source and converts them into electric signal. Two types of microphones are used: omnidirectional (collects the sound around) and uni-directional (collects the sound from a specific direction).

All you need is to have a recorder, a microphone and its lead.

When recording, hold it firmly, but not tightly. To avoid moving the mic lead, take a small loop of it in your mic hand, being careful that it's not actually touching the body of the mic.

4. Interview techniques and types of radio programmes

4.1. Interview techniques:

The trainer has to make sure the trainees understand how to conduct interviews, how to prepare close and open questions, how to prepare the guest.

Short lecture: Interview (Question technique and conception course)

The interview characterizes outstandingly for a contribution organization: on the one hand the correct interview technique is introduced and on the other hand the photographic material for the further processing is produced - if wants -. The fundamental rules of the interview guided tour follow a short introduction to the different interview kinds (Inquiries, interview to the person, about the opinion, to the thing and studio conversation): Delimitation of the topic, selection the suitable/competent interviewpartners, drawing up of a question plan, avoidance of closed questions - that the interviewpartners can answer exclusively with yes or refusal - and the avoidance of leading questions, priority of the open question formulation (Why, As, because of ...) in order to get information sufficiently, do not fall into the word to the interviewpartners and avoiding audible approvals.

Practical practice: Interview

After a repeated short introduction into the technical handling of the recording equipment and under reference to possible sources of errors during the photo, if the participants are directed to interview photos: in this case is made onto the sources of errors of loud ambient noises attentive and the use of the own body as sound insulation. Through this inquiry practice the participants are supposed to be trusted for the first time with the experience of the interview situation. At a shorter duration of the workshops the participants are supposed to interview each other, at sufficiently time can be made also exterior interviews. The trainers should pay attention to that, that all participants approach in that one to hear environment. Special nerve tickle at outdoor shots is to practice the addressing of unknown people with a microphone and simultaneously the correct technique commitment. The photo duration must not exceed ten minutes.

Listening and feedback

Their own role is supposed to make the common listening of the interviews conscious to the participants as interviewers (Hear the own voice and speech and question behavior, reactions of the people/ interviewpartners) and to find out the stand-alone one from mistakes to allow.

Frequent technical sources of errors are: very loud ambient noises, microphone noises, wrong turn-off level attitude, the non-dissolution of the tracing press button, so-called fading recordings, speaking at the same time of interviewers and asked person. With regard to the contents very often closed questions are set up, intermittent the interviewpartners and not leaving the prepared concept, regardless what the interviewpartners say.

If the mistakes are not identified by the participants in a stand-alone way, they are made attentive by the trainers onto that. By the identification of the mistakes can be guided now onto the material processing.

It can happen that the way you put your questions, you have this kind of answers "yes or no". That kind of close questions are not good for an interview. Examples: is it good to kill animals? Are you a teacher? Do you believe in God?

It is better to ask open questions in order to have good answers. Examples: why is it bad to kill animals? Why have you chosen to be a teacher?

The questions have to be short, clear, and focus on the subject.

It is very important to listen carefully to the answers you are recording because they can give you hints for more important questions for the listeners.

Handling your guest:

The main point here is to discuss the interview with the guest. Indicate the subjects to be covered and create the degree of rapport that can make the guest feel confident and relax. Ice - breaking is important before interview.

The guest should know that mistakes can be removed and that undesired parts could be removed if he feels like. You should discuss about how he likes to be presented.

4.2. Types of radio programmes

Programming for community radio is based on the structure and needs of listeners. Here are different types of radio programmes very common in the community radio environment and in other radio stations as well. Definitely, each type of station will adapt according to its aims, its target, the audience, and its category.

Music in community radio context: the music tone will be modulated to the listenership. Normally, it's very rare in community radio stations to listen to the top hits, the latest tubes. Those are better for music and commercial stations.

vox pop programmes: the purpose is to have as many as possible answers from many people on one same subject, one question, and one topic.

news bulletins: there are important ethical aspects to respect when making news. Those principles are: objectivity, balance, accuracy, clarity, brevity, recency, impartiality and legality.

participatory programmes and listeners forum: this is crucial for community stations. The programme presenters have to approach the listeners, the local associations and the target groups, set the subjects and topics together after consultations and open the microphone.

magazines: a magazine gives a wide range of information targeting the immediate and day-to-day needs of the listeners, alternating music and speech after a few minutes. A magazine can include interviews, music and speech.

educational programmes: they an educational content and approach. For example: enhancement of language skills and cultural background, cooking, hygiene, laws, health.

documentaries and features: the difference between documentary and feature is that the first in based on facts, documentary evidence with clear sources and contemporary interviews while a feature is a very free form of documentary.

5. Planning short programmes and exercises

Select the subject:

The trainer starts by encouraging all the participants to select different subjects to develop in groups. Each group will make a five minute interview which will be used in the programme.

The trainer introduces how to make a programme plan and bring them to write down a running order (a list of different parts of a programme and timing).

Example:

Title of the programme

Presenter

order	events	timing
1	jingle/opening music	0'15"
2	cassette	1'00"
3	Greetings and opening announce	0'20"
4	Music	1'25"
5	Introduction	0'20"
6	Music part 1	2'30"
7	Interview 1	4'10"
8	Mdisc	0'30"
9	Music	3'00"
10	Intro part 2	0'20"
11	Interview 2	0'25"
12	Mdisc	0'15"
	Music	- CD
	Conclusion + back announce	- Mic
	Jingle	- Record,
	cassette	

15'00"

Based on this example, the trainees write down their own programmes' plans.

6. Introduction to the studio

The main aim is to reduce the techno fear. The trainer presents all the studio equipment and show how they operate. Then, the trainees can enjoy practical exercises and record the programmes they have planned.

The mixing desk:

All the studio equipment is connected to the mixing desk. It's good to let the trainees connect the equipment themselves, if you use a portable mixing desk and equipment. The trainer has to show the role of faders, which control how much volume comes out of the desk. Each fader has a "gain" control which affects how much volume goes into each fader.

Recording exercises and listening. All the course participants have a chance to record their programmes on MDs, using the microphone, the CD player, the cassette player and headphones.

7. Feedback

The trainer takes time to listen, with the participants, to the interviews and recorded short programmes. There will be a room for some comments about what has been done well, or what has been wrong or difficult. Encourage the trainees to make short programmes using the techniques they have learnt in the course and listen to the programmes.

It's important for the trainer to assess what has been achieved by the course. All objectives have been met?

What package of knowledge have the trainees gained during the course?

What are they able to do now?

Do they understand what is a community radio and how it works? Can they operate a Minidisc recorder?

Can they make an interview?

Do they like to continue the training and start a basic course?

Follow up and continuity: the trainees who want to push further their skills are encouraged to get involved in radio production as volunteers, and the station should have the responsibility of the follow up of the group.
