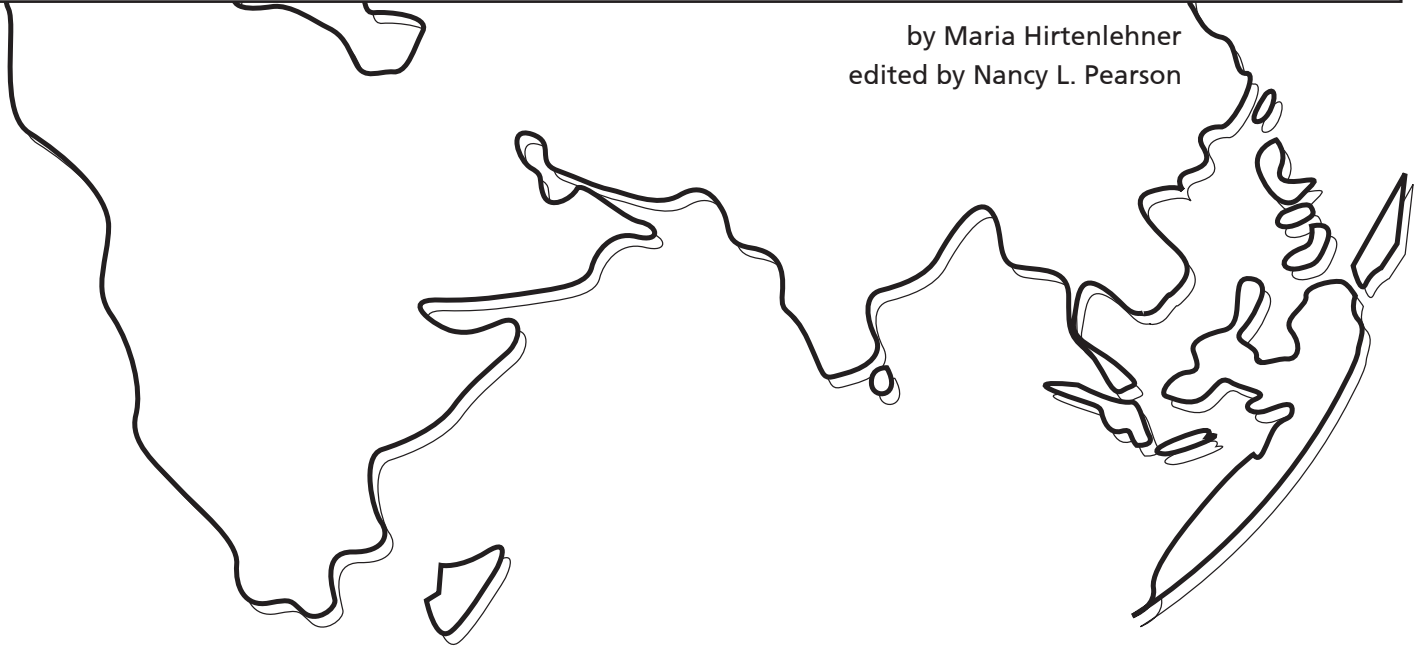


**TANDEM®: CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN POLICE AND MIGRANTS<sup>1</sup>**  
A PROCESS FOR CROSS CULTURAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN POLICE OFFICERS AND MIGRANTS<sup>2</sup>

by Maria Hirtenlehner  
edited by Nancy L. Pearson



A Tactical Notebook published by  
the New Tactics Project  
of the Center for Victims of Torture

**Published by**

The Center for Victims of Torture  
New Tactics in Human Rights Project  
717 East River Road  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 USA  
[www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org), [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org)

**Notebook Series Editor**

Nancy L. Pearson

**Copyediting**

Karlynn Fronek

**Layout**

Jennifer Meelberg

**© 2006 Center for Victims of Torture**

This publication may be freely reproduced in print and in electronic form as long as this copyright notice appears on all copies.

**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the New Tactics in Human Rights Project. The project does not advocate specific tactics or policies.

- 1 Author biography
- 2 Letter from the New Tactics Project Director
- 3 Introduction
- 4 Police Human Rights Training in Austria
- 8 The Birth of the Tandem Program
- 9 The Tandem Process
- 15 Evaluation
- 16 Challenges
- 17 Transplanting the Tactic

### **Acknowledgements**

Susanna Gratzl, my “Tandem” colleague, does very important work for the whole Tandem® project. It could not be done alone.

Thanks to Roger Brooks for photos on pages 10, 12, 13 (top), and 14.

### **Author**

Maria Hirtenlehner is the Project Manager for the International Centre for Cultures and Languages (ICCL) in Vienna, Austria. She is lecturer at the University of Vienna for German as a Foreign Language and also teaches German as a Foreign or Second Language to migrants and refugees. She has worked extensively in Teacher Training Programs in Austria and other European Countries. She participated in publications like “Lesen ist mehr”, “Kulturen in Bewegung” (editor) and “Dimensionen” (Manual for German as a foreign Language): and tandem, Polizisten treffen Migranten. Literarische Protokolle. She lives in Vienna, Austria.

### **Organizational Information:**

The International Center for Cultures and Languages is an NGO that provides training in intercultural relations, communications, human rights, and anti-racism. ICCL also organizes and participates in domestic and international meetings on these topics, offers resource materials, publications and consulting services. ICCL participates in several programs from the European Union. It offers training in theory and practice and sees itself as an interface between university and extramural education. The programs are aimed for persons working in the areas of: the integration of ethnic minorities, adult and higher education, social and youth work, business, health care, policing, public administration and all those, who are interested in these topics.

### **Contact Information**

The International Centre for Cultures and Languages (ICCL)

Internationales Zentrum für Kulturen und Sprachen  
Susanna Gratzl, Maria Hirtenlehner  
Siccardsburggasse 59, 1100 Vienna, Austria

**Website:** <http://www.izks.at>

**e-mail:** [izks@atnet.at](mailto:izks@atnet.at)

**phone:** +43 / 1 / 600 56 70

<sup>1</sup> TANDEM® International: for information on language learning through the pairing methodology <http://www.tandem-fundazioa.info>, <http://www.tandemcity.info>, <http://www.tandem-schools.com/>

<sup>2</sup> In this notebook, the term “migrant” refers to persons who have entered Austria for reasons ranging from personal choice, work, reunion of the family, climatic or natural disasters, to the United Nations definition of a refugee—having fled one’s own country based on persecution of one’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.



August 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the New Tactics in Human Rights Tactical Notebook Series! In each notebook a human rights practitioner describes an innovative tactic that was used successfully in advancing human rights. The authors are part of the broad and diverse human rights movement including non-government and government perspectives, educators, law enforcement personnel, truth and reconciliation processes, women's rights and mental health advocates. They have both adapted and pioneered tactics that have contributed to human rights in their home countries. In addition, they have utilized tactics that when adapted can be applied in other countries and other situations to address a variety of issues.

Each notebook contains detailed information on *how* the author and his or her organization achieved what they did. We want to inspire other human rights practitioners to think *tactically* – and to broaden the realm of tactics considered to effectively advance human rights.

This notebook shows how the International Centre for Cultures and Languages (ICCL) in Vienna adapted the “TANDEM®” program—originally created for language learning— to human rights education with police and migrant populations in a unique and profound way called “Intercultural-TANDEM®” to provide a unique and applicable model to improve intercultural understanding. The program currently operates as part of a larger police training course. Although the Austrian program benefits from its affiliation with the police training course, this model could be adapted, implemented and succeed independently.

The entire series of Tactical Notebooks is available online at [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org). Additional notebooks are already available and others will continue to be added over time. On our web site you will also find other tools, including a searchable database of tactics, a discussion forum for human rights practitioners and information about our workshops and symposium. To subscribe to the New Tactics newsletter, please send an e-mail to: [newtactics@cvt.org](mailto:newtactics@cvt.org)

The New Tactics in Human Rights Project is an international initiative led by a diverse group of organizations and practitioners from around the world. The project is coordinated by the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) and grew out of our experiences as a creator of new tactics and as a treatment center that also advocates for the protection of human rights from a unique position—one of healing and reclaiming civic leadership.

We hope that you will find these notebooks informational and thought provoking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Pearson".

Nancy Pearson



## Introduction

The International Centre for Cultures and Languages (ICCL) in Vienna adapted the “TANDEM®” program—originally created for language learning—to human rights education with police and migrant populations in a unique and profound way called “Intercultural-TANDEM®.”

The result has been “Tandem® Learning” a cultural contact program that improves intercultural understanding. The Intercultural-Tandem® program involves a series of interactions between 20 to 25 high level police officers and an equal number of migrants from other countries. The interactions occur mainly in structured group settings and in one-on-one Tandem® pair relationships. To date, over 150 high level police officers and about the same number of migrants have participated in this life changing intercultural experience. The program was designed by the ICCL in Vienna in response to several violent interactions between the police and migrants in Austria.

In Austria, the Tandem® program currently operates as part of a larger police-training course. Officers must apply for participation in the program, which consists of seven four-hour training sessions augmented by several informal activities involving the tandem pairs. Although the program benefits from its affiliation with the police training course, this model could also be implemented and succeed independently.

The program began in 1999 and interest in it continues to grow. Last year, the program received at least 80 applications from high-level police officers from all over Austria for 25 available positions for each program offered. The program has documented improvements in attitudes of both police and migrant participants.

### *From a police officer participant perspective:*

“Since I have been in the course, I am much more interested and more open minded towards clients of the police who look “foreign.” I start talking to them, even if it takes more time. A colleague, who observed this many times, started doing the same. Before the course I did not personally know any migrants.”

### *A migrant participant perspective:*

“I have learned much by Tandem®. I was invited to the police station on the border where my Tandem® partner is the superior. He showed me the station and I have seen how the controls are done, how they check

documents, how they check if the documents are authentic, what they do when they have to check the whole bus.”

This notebook provides a unique and applicable model to a problem that occurs worldwide. The challenges in adapting it to different contexts will relate to how and where Tandem® program is implemented, the corresponding degree of support needed from the police hierarchy, the availability of funding, and the ability to recruit enough participants from the police and particularly the migrant community to participate.

## Background on the Tandem® Project

The pattern of immigration to Austria is similar to that of many other countries. In the 1970s there was an organized migration, where people were invited to come to fill jobs. Originally, most of these guest workers came from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. Since the 1980s there has been a big change; more of the migrant populations have come from Eastern Europe as well as from Africa and Asia. Many migrants from Africa and Asia have entered Austria as asylum seekers, because there is almost no other way to get into the country legally. When these new migrants arrive, they face even greater discrimination than earlier “guest workers”.

By the early 1990s there was greater interest by police for training in social skills, but training about human rights was still focused on legal issues. Consciousness and awareness building were not on the agenda at that time. This changed after several confrontations between the police and migrant communities, which shocked the entire country—such as an asylum-seeker from Nigeria who died in 1999 during his deportation by the Austrian Police. The problem was clearly not with the laws—as the European Human Rights Convention is part of Austria’s legal system—but something else. The ICCL responded with the idea to incorporate an approach used in language training to teach human rights values to police officers and migrants.

The Tandem® program methodology pairs each police officer in the program with a migrant person now living in the com-

“In the human rights seminar the trainer starts the discussion by saying that police are the biggest human rights organization. It is their job to protect human rights. They always look surprised by this.”

—Maria Hirtenlehner

“It’s been a journey into another world.”

—Police officer, Interculture-TANDEM® participant

“This training course was a further step in my personal development.”

—Police Officer  
Interculture-TANDEM®  
participant

munity. The pair works and learns together over a seven-month period using a mutually chosen project, plus attending regular meetings called “seminars.” The seminars provide experiential activities and group discussions in a transforming environment in which the police and their migrant partners explore a broad range of topics, including culture, identity, racism, communication as well as conflict styles and patterns in order to build understanding, empathy, and cultural competency.

As noted earlier, Tandem® program in Vienna is part of a broader human rights training course for high level police officers, giving the tactic a broad impact not only in the lives of individual police officers but with their relationships with their colleagues and in their communities. Currently in its eighth year, the course has gained respect and interest due to this Tandem® component.

In 2005, the Ministry of the Interior, which funds and selects the police candidates for the course, received 80 applications from higher level police officers for approximately 20 available positions. Although this course does not contribute to the career promotion of participating officers, the Ministry of the Interior has indicated to us that this number of applicants is high. “Our office has received some complaints from police officers that were not chosen and others in the course have told us they had applied several times before being accepted.” The Tandem® program now has a reputation—it is a privilege to take part in this course.

All in all about 150 Tandem® pairs have gone through the course in Vienna. A much larger number of people have been involved - friends, colleagues, family members, journalists, writers, etc. have been included in the meetings and activities of the pairs. On an institutional level, the Tandem® program has also been presented, transferred and incorporated in different programs and institutions. A project by the European Union called “**compas**” – combating and preventing discrimination within and by the police and schools has been chosen as an example of good practice and has been presented in different European countries. A pilot project for Hungarian police officers with migrants and refugees began in Hungary in 2005.

Originally the idea of tandem-pairing was created for language learning, mainly in bilingual regions, such as Southern Tyrol (Italy), where Italian and German are spoken, but generally people speak only one language. In this context, the idea of mutual learning from each other in direct exchange was born. The Italian speaking persons learned German, the German

speaking persons learned Italian. The concept relies on the premise that each person is a student and a teacher at the same time.

The tandem-pairing idea was extended beyond language training in Spain with a group of migrants and a group of local people interested in knowing people from other countries. There are other examples but it was a new idea to use the concept to create understanding and empathy between police officers and migrants.



Maria Hirtenlehner (front) and Susanna Gratzl (back) ready for the Tandem® bike race in Hungary 2005

## Police Human Rights Training in Austria

Human rights education for police started in the 1990s. As with many of these early programs, it was based on legal issues. By the late 1990s the Ministry of Interiors, the agency responsible for the initial and further education of the police, sensed the need for more general human rights education. In 1998 a “week of human rights” was organized as the first step towards implementing human rights education. Officials became increasingly conscious that training focused on laws alone was not sufficient and that addressing cultural awareness, sensibility, and a broader reflection on immigration and intercultural society was necessary.

About this time, ICCL offered a program sponsored by the European Union to educate adults on immigration. Participants came from various NGOs. At that time there were very few contacts between police and NGOs. Many couldn’t imagine that a cooperative program could work. There was one exception and that was in the prevention of domestic violence where police worked with women’s organizations. ICCL then started thinking about how to integrate

the police into an educational program concerning immigration.

In 1998, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, ICCL applied for financial support for an international exchange programme among police officers to be embedded in intercultural trainings. Although the programme was not accepted at that time, it created a closer relationship between our institution and the Ministry of Interior who disseminated part of our programme to police officers. There were some seminars, particularly “human rights and discrimination” which became popular among police officers and which were very successful. Unfortunately, there were more interested than could be accepted for the seminars. This gave ICCL the confidence to move ahead to create the Tandem® program.

As a result, the seven-month police-training course in human rights—“Police Action in a Multicultural Society”—was developed. Police participants attend a total of twelve (12) classes and seven (7) Tandem® program seminars—about three weeks or 16 days total—over the course of the seven-month period. The course comprises 115 instruction units, and 15 units for the project work. During one of the seminars, we go out to a restaurant and, if possible, a cultural program, and the final evening is a celebration event. The restaurant evening is very important for the group dynamic. The course gives police participants the opportunity to deal with topics like intercultural communication, development of migration, legal and socio-psychological situation of migrants in Austria, conflict management, human rights, discrimination, and institutional culture in a very intensive way.

ICCL has now offered this course in cooperation with the Security Academy/Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior Affairs for seven years. It is also supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In the initial years, police officers came from only two eastern Austrian provinces. By 2003/04 a significant expansion took place and for the first time police officers from all over Austria could apply to take the course. In 2005 there were over 80 applications from all parts of Austria. Based on evaluations from each year, the Tandem® program continues to expand.

### **The Birth of the Tandem® Program in Police Training**

Prior to the late 1990s police training concerning human rights relied upon the teaching of legal technical knowledge. The shaping of opinion and awareness played a minor role. The idea for using the Tandem® program with police officers began in

Austria in 1999. The coordinators had developed a course about intercultural communication for social workers and students and thought they would try this with refugees. The participants came together and did role-play exercises to learn about each other’s cultures. Coordinators were planning a new police course and thought the pairing approach would be a good idea for police officers as well. The unique aspect of the overall police training course, however, is that during this same period of time, the police officers are involved in a Tandem® program in order to directly meet people from other countries and specifically be paired with a person from another country to work together to develop a joint project.

Now with the new training course developed by ICCL and by the Security Academy, building skills of cultural understanding and empathy using this new teaching method, the Tandem® program is a regular part of the curriculum. As a result, much more importance is assigned to the exchange of experiences and opinions between the participants—course instructors, police officers, and migrants.

This collective experience is achieved through the implementation of a variety of group work techniques including role-playing, the use of all sorts of exercises, discussions, case studies, excursions, and projects by the participants particularly in their Tandem® program pairs. These informal learning processes, such as visiting an exhibition about immigration with the migrants or visiting a refugee camp and then together having a dinner form an integral part of this training course. For example a very successful writer, who was born in Bulgaria and came to Austria as a refugee, writes in German – although Bulgarian is his mother language. He was invited to read from his novels and to engage in discussion with the police. This was extremely successful!

As noted, the Tandem® program plays a key role in the police course. A very important part of the course constitutes the one-day introductory seminar where the participants and instructors become acquainted and clarify their expectations before they are paired with their Tandem® program partner.

The time allowed for this introduction positively affects the course’s future and has a very positive effect on its further development. Then, at each seminar contents and teaching methods are explained and how the Tandem® program plays a key role. The program’s rationale is as follows:

*Communication, intercultural encounters and confrontation with ambiguous situations and contradictions form an integral part of our*

*work and everyday life. Each seminar allows the participants to reflect on their daily experiences and challenges, to gain knowledge and to widen their competencies for action. The overall training course is designed to become an opportunity for exchange, for collective development of strategies and theories.*

The police training program includes senior officers from different parts of police and constabulary work, such as aliens' police, state police, criminal investigators, border control police, etc. Participation is voluntary and based on interest and a need for someone to deal with those topics. The Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior Affairs accepts the applications and makes the final selections. The integration of the Tandem® program within the larger police training curriculum has been positive and has gained the attention and participation of a large number of leaders and future leaders among police officers. Even as a separate, stand-alone program, it would have merit. Recruitment of police officers as participants and securing stable funding might be more difficult, but the program content would be equally relevant.

### **The Tandem® Process—Learning in Cultural Contact**

The Tandem® program portion of the course—the police officers and migrants working together on intercultural understanding—involves seven four-hour evening sessions with the migrant partners. As noted earlier, the entire Tandem® experience lasts for the full seven-month period of the police training course. In addition to the other course requirements, the police participate in all Tandem® program seminars as well as a project they undertake with their migrant partner. Partners are paired at the very beginning and also meet outside of these seminars. The ICCL course coordinators stay in touch with each Tandem® pair. The pairs are also encouraged to contact ICCL if there are difficulties in connecting with each other.

The Tandem® pairs meet and do things together like go together to a restaurant, football match, walking, etc. More importantly, the pairs develop a project together. They decide together what to do and can basically do whatever they want—within reason. The role of the ICCL coordinators is to make this process happen as well as to ensure the projects are appropriate.

Some Tandem® pair projects are focused on “private interests” like cooking or painting while others concern broader public interest, for example:

- A police officer and a Kurd from Turkey discovered they both liked to cook and decided to do

a cooking project. They met at a café, talked about their ideas, went to a market, shopped for the ingredients, and cooked the meal and ate together. As part of their project they made a video of the process of cooking together. A person from the Ministry of the Interior filmed the process for documentation.

- A police officer and a Chinese woman painted together. She is a very accomplished water-colour artist (flowers and calligraphy) and a painting teacher. The officer was interested in painting and in learning her style. They made a series of photos of their work together. He also learned how to write his name in Chinese letters.
- A police officer and a Kurdish painter created a painting exhibition. The police officer came from a small town in the countryside. He shared stories about his town, brought old photographs, and the Kurdish painter painted his impressions of all this. Meanwhile the police officer prepared for the exhibit in his old town—arranging an exhibition room, frames, buffet, invitations, funding etc). When the exhibit took place in Kaendorf it was very successful. The local city council purchased a painting (Istanbul Greets Kaendorf) which hangs in city hall. The police officer was very proud to present his new Kurdish friend in his town.
- A police officer and a Pakistani translated information sheets for asylum seekers in Punjabi and Urdu. Those leaflets are the first information asylum seekers are given when they cross the border and enter Austria.

Although the Tandem® program is a very important part of the overall police course in Vienna, it could be operated as a freestanding program. Police officers have often had very negative experiences with migrants in the course of their job experience. During the Tandem® program, they have the opportunity to meet ordinary people from other countries, such as Ivory Coast, Turkey, Romania, India, Pakistan and Hungary. They meet people, many of who have families, are employed and sometimes well educated. Harmful stereotypes disappear, as the police officers learn how these migrants live lives not very different from their own.

The police officers are often astonished about this. For example, some police officers entered the program with the stereotype that Africans are drug dealers. During the Tandem® experience they meet people who do not match the stereotypes and their attitudes change. At the beginning of this project, we thought that migrants would help train police officers. But



soon it became clear that training is for all the people involved. It helps migrants overcome fear of police and prejudices toward them. It helps them to get to know new members of the society and to learn about themselves. One migrant said: "Since I have a friend who works in the police, I feel really integrated in the society." He further explained that police are a closed but important part of the society. Until his Tandem® program experience, he did not have an unbiased attitude toward police.

### THE TANDEM® PROCESS

The Tandem® program adapts a teaching method that improves intercultural understanding through interactions between a police officer and a migrant. Many of the interactions take place within structured group sessions involving approximately 20-25 Tandem® program pairs. Others occur outside of the formal sessions.

The Tandem® program is designed to give participants the opportunity to get to know people from different cultural backgrounds in a new and positive way. Currently few Austrian police are first or second migrant generation or non-white. Both police officers and migrants experience negative experiences with each other during their work or everyday life. Through the Tandem® program, police officers get to personally know migrants and learn about their lives and cultures. In turn, the migrants get an insight into the life and working conditions of the police. Thus, prejudices are dismantled and a mutual understanding begins to be developed. Sometimes they become friends.

The Tandem® program makes it possible for the participants to meet in a relaxed atmosphere, which is based on equal rights. The purpose of these seminars is an intercultural exchange of experiences in immigration, communication in different cultures, prejudices, rac-

ism and discrimination, and the sharing of life stories through many different kinds of activities.

The Tandem® program opens up a space for immediate experiences, process-oriented discovery, and social learning all within the framework of antiracist education. It creates mutual confidence, promotes sensitivity and awareness. Experience shows that the Tandem® program creates the ideal conditions for a reflective learning process of the participants. The awareness of the relativity of one's own frame of reference, curiosity in other people's cultural background, tolerance and respect vis-à-vis diversity, mutual empathy, and experience in dealing with unfamiliar cultures and conflicts constitute important aspects of intercultural expertise.

### DURATION OF THE TANDEM® EXPERIENCE

The Tandem® program seminars last four hours on seven evenings over the course of the seven months police training course. During that time the participating police officers meet with immigrated people in Austria. These relationships are deepened by mutually arranged meetings between the Tandem® program partners (the police officer and their migrant partner). During the last evening, participants celebrate with a music program, a banquet, and the presentation of joint projects.

### IMPORTANT PRE-CONDITIONS

*Willing partners:*

The Tandem® program is based upon open and honest interaction between police participants and migrants. It is desirable to have migrant participants from many countries and cultural backgrounds who have experi-



Tandem® program opening session-- informal talks between pairs during break time

"I will tell my colleagues to take care of their language. Not to use any more expressions like "nigger."

—Police officer participant

*Use of language and racism, for example the term "nigger", has been discussed and why it's bad to call others this name. Migrants will also talk about why they are being arrested—just because of the colour of their skin. The Intercultural-TANDEM® seminars facilitate exchanges based on equal rights and provide the possibility to role play, talk and sit together to explore and understand both common and different human experiences.*

enced the trials of immigration. Migrant participants should also have a knowledge of German, a residence permit for Austria, be in good standing with the law, be self-confident and willing to discuss and share their personal life experiences. They should have the ability to reflect on problems in a general way. Notification for each Tandem® partner is given in advance.

Each year there are migrants from former trainings as well as new participants. ICCL staff meets with all the people who have made a commitment to participate prior to the first joint session with the police officers. The migrants hear from each other about the experiences of previous trainings. It is very important to meet with the migrant partners to prepare them for their police partner as well as assure them that staff are available at all times for consultation and support. ICCL facilitators meet with them again in the middle of the course. Program staff has found that participating migrants provide more feedback when they have an opportunity to speak with them directly.

Voluntary participation by police officers is important as well. That is the reason for the application process. Police officers who see the Tandem® program as interesting and important will be more likely to participate fully and take advantage of the unique experience the program offers.

#### *Compensation and coordination:*

The migrants get paid an allowance for their time and various expenses they may have incurred during the course, such as bus tickets and project expenses. The police officers receive professional course credit for their participation.

During the duration of the Tandem® seminars, the ICCL coordinators supervise and support the participants via e-mail and dialogue, help with the implementation of projects, and facilitate a trusting working atmosphere. All these elements are important for the success of the Tandem® program.

#### *Coordinating team and classroom management:*

A team of four persons—three women and a man, manages the seminars. The management responsibilities include recruiting and selecting participants, as well as the overall organisation and care of the whole process. One staff person has personal experiences with immigration. The team arranges and supports the learning process and initiates questions. This small team meets before every Tandem® program seminar in order to design the program and at least once a year to reflect upon the past course and to plan the following one. Good cooperation among team members is important.

The coordinating team must pay close attention to classroom management in order to create conditions for a reflective learning process. The team has designed activities to enhance awareness of one's own frame of reference, and to build curiosity in other's cultural background, tolerance, respect, and empathy. Activity experiences help participants deal with cultural difference and conflicts. This skill building creates a growing intercultural expertise.

Another important aspect of classroom-management is building a comfortable and trusting space. Participants sit in a big circle. For the activities they are often divided into small groups (4 to 8 persons each). There are drinks and biscuits in the room to facilitate informal interaction. It is also important to reserve time for the breaks. Experience has shown that the informal conversations that occur during the breaks are important for the whole process and the intercultural connections the program seeks to foster.

#### **THE TANDEM® PROCESS AT WORK**

The Tandem® experience relies on the creation of pairs between a police officer and a migrant. Through a series of mutual learning experiences, including discussions about their lives and issues important to them. Sessions include time for socializing and fun as well as constructive projects where the pairs learn to work together towards a mutually created product. Because the experience is extended over many months, close relationships develop among people not likely to be friends or working partners with each other.



Tandem® participants together during closing celebration gathering—participant from India (left) and Romania (right)

#### *The first evening together: Seminar One*

The first evening the participants come together lays the groundwork and sets the tone for the cooperation discussion style for the group, the tasks, and

the pairings.

When participants arrive, Polaroid photos are taken of them and they sign the pictures and stick them on a poster. The poster will be displayed during all seminars. This acts as a handy “who’s who” reference, and reinforces the idea that every participant is equally important.

Our experience is that participants unfamiliar with the Tandem® program can be quite nervous and excited in the beginning; this is especially true for police officers. They are accustomed to being in a commanding position with migrants, whereas in the program they find themselves without either the uniform or established position. Seminar moderators must create a neutral space for dialogue with equal rights during discussions.



Two migrant Tandem participants with photo board of all Tandem participants hanging on the wall in the background.

The evening begins with a brainstorming process where the group develops the rules for their work and interaction with each other. Facilitators make notes of all suggestions on a big poster. Examples include: being respectful of one another, sensitive, open, and maintaining confidentiality, while having fun keeping group conversation confidential.

### **FORMING TANDEM® PROGRAM PAIRS**

At the initial session, everybody waits curiously for the pairing. Staff cuts postcards in two, writes two names on the back of the card, and distributes them. Then everybody goes around the room to look for the missing piece of his or her postcard. It is a very exciting moment for the participants as well as for the coordinators, when the pairs find each other.

Sometimes one person is without a partner, in which case the coordinators intervene. If this situation occurs,

one of the trainers will stay with the police officer or the migrant or a group of three is built to ensure that no one is left out of the processes. Naturally, people feel left out if there is no partner for them.

Some basic criteria for building pairs are used. One criterion is age. Some of the migrants are still students and rather young, so they are not paired with the eldest policemen. Consideration is also given to *where participants live* and their *flexibility to travel* within Austria so that pairs can have chances to meet outside of the seminar sessions.

After the exciting pairing, participants have a half-hour break. Most of them go to the snack bar in the school to have a drink and start talking with each other. This is a great moment as we observe active participation. Experience shows how easily perceptions can change when other reminders are no longer present—such as police uniforms or migrant neighbourhood environments. One evening two participants who had not found their partner met at the snack bar during the break and soon realized they were each others’ Tandem® program partner. They had not bothered to check their postcard halves with each other because the police officer thought this person was a fellow police officer, not a migrant from Romania. The migrant partner in turn thought the police officer was a fellow migrant.

### *Remaining Tandem® program seminars*

More and more, we are conscious that it is not so important to do a lot of exercises for the sake of exercises. Rather, focused activities help participants discuss and exchange experiences. This is what leads to perception, attitude and behaviour change. This is why the first evening is of great importance, it builds the basis for further development.

With our experience over the years, several topics seem most relevant for creating opportunities for real discussion. The remaining seminars are reserved for the following main topics:

- Identity
- Culture
- Prejudice
- Discrimination/Racism
- Use of language
- Courage to stand up for one’s beliefs

A set of different activities is planned for every Tandem® group meeting. Facilitators meet to discuss every topic and choose the most appropriate activities for each group each year. These activities give the police officers and the migrant partners opportunities to

have a topic-relevant experience with each other and then discuss how it felt.



Tandem® seminar evening small group discussion

## EXAMPLES OF GROUP ACTIVITIES

### *Names Activity*

This activity is done the first evening in small groups of 4-6. For the first group building process we distribute candy—very colourful chocolate-candies, generally eaten by children. Each participant takes one piece; those who have taken the same colour become a group. Then participants are asked to speak about their name. The questions are:

- What is your name?
- Does your name have a particular meaning?
- Are there any traditions of giving names in your family or country?
- Do you like your name?
- Do you have a nickname?



Cover of the book edited by Susanna Gratzl, Maria Hirtenlehner, Herbert Langthaler, “Tandem®. Police officers meet Migrants. Literary Protocols.”

After about 30 minutes in these groups, the participants are asked to present each other very briefly to the larger group and tell three facts they consider most important about the person.

The name exercise is good because everyone has to contribute something and many times police officers have noticed that the migrants had more stories to tell. With this exercise, many of the police officers started reflecting and talking about themselves, their

origins, their families etc. Participants also learn about different rules regarding how names are given or why names can be confusing from one culture to another. For example, many Nigerians have the same name. Often police officers thought documents from Nigerians are forged because of this. Others have names that refer to their ethnic or geographic origins.

### *“Stages of my life” or “Me, you and the world” activity*

This is another activity introduced early in the program. Each person gets a paper with questions such as: “What happened in my life / my family/ my country in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1985,” and up to the current year including a question “What are my plans for the future.”

Everybody first thinks individually about it and takes notes. Then staff builds groups of six people (three pairs) and invites them to share and discuss the answers to these questions. Very often they find common responses like age, number of children; but often the police officers realize that generally their childhood was happy and quite stable with a straightforward career path to police work. They know how many years they still have to work, what they will earn in ten years etc. On the other hand, many of the migrants have experiences of war, poverty, or natural catastrophes like earthquakes. They have lost members of their family and friends. They have had to leave their homes, jobs, and countries. Many migrants could not go to school regularly. They had to learn a new language and they had to make a completely new start to their careers. The police officers, in contrast, have an opportunity to see that very often (though not always) immigration is not a voluntary act. Finally, historical, political, and socio-economic factors and events over the years are presented to the group and reveal their impact on personal life stories.

### *Other activities*

Several other activities for the seminars have been developed to provide experiential opportunities and skill building. Some of the sessions include activities that have participants reflect upon and discuss language problems and per-

“When I filled out the form for my asylum application, the officer asked for my family name.”  
 “I don’t have one.” — “Everybody has one.” — “Not me.” — “What’s the name of your father?” — “Mohammad Azam Khan.” — “Then Khan is your family name.”<sup>3</sup>

“I’m very happy that I have got the possibility to meet you and to discuss with you. You know, until now I didn’t like black people and I never had the opportunity to get into contact with people from Africa in a relaxed situation.”  
 — Police officer participant

## Tandem®: Cross-cultural exchange between police and migrants 13

<sup>3</sup> The quote appeared in Tandem®. Police officers meet Migrants. Literary Protocols. Edited by Susanna Gratzl, Maria Hirtenlehner, Herbert Langthaler, “The president and the ambassador.” Mandelbaum Verlag, Wien 2006 (See photo of the book cover above).

ceptions of identity. The following are some examples of these exercises:

- 1) **Identity activity:** Participants are asked to reflect upon the different roles they are called upon to play. For example, a participant might be a man, a police officer, a father, a husband, a friend, and brother. Each person thinks about these roles and then draws a circle indicating how large each of these roles is in their life to get a sense of who they are.
- 2) **Communication activity:** Participants are asked how to say hello to each other in their own language and culture. Each person gets a piece of paper with a different mandate such as “in your culture it is polite to shake hands” or “in your culture it is appropriate to touch someone’s head.” They then go around the room greeting people according to the mandate. This activity generates awareness but also a lot of laughter and friendliness.
- 3) **Perception activity:** In small groups, participants look at pictures that have been provided and describe what they see. The group discusses the differences and similarities of how people interpret the pictures. This exercise shows how much people read into a situation based on their personal background, prejudices, and experiences.
- 4) **Cooperation activity:** We give a questionnaire about general cultural knowledge. For example, a singer might be very well known in one country and completely unknown in another. Nobody can answer all the questions alone. The participants must move around and find who can answer each question in the group. With this exercise participants understand the relativity and ethnocentrism of knowledge.



Communication activity: Participants are asked how to say hello to each other, each with a different “language and culture”

- 5) **Role-play activities:** Role-play activities are incorporated into many of the sessions. For example, we discuss terms such as integration, discrimination, prejudice, racism, sexism, the use of scapegoats, etc. We provide a definition to each small group, just one term per group, and ask them to discuss the term. Then we ask each group to think about how to perform this term and to prepare to play it. The remaining participants watch the role-play to identify and discuss the term being presented.

#### *Experiences of the individually organized meetings and projects*

The Tandem® program pairs are encouraged to conduct projects together. At the end of each session, participants are reminded to continue to work on their projects together—they may need to again exchange phone numbers and fix a time to meet with each other between the sessions.

The pairs can decide together what they want to do—within reason. The coordinators ensure that the projects are appropriate, respectful, and safe. There have been a wide variety of interesting examples in the last few years. In addition to previously named examples, others include:

- The translation of information sheets for asylum seekers into many different languages
- A photo exhibit on the topic “Home”
- A quiz on languages
- A film reflecting the idea of “border”
- A comparison of the home countries of the participants
- When there was the Tsunami in Asia, we had two participants from Indonesia. These two pairs decided to hold a charity event for Indonesia. Finally the whole group joined them. The result was a big cultural event with nearly 200 people where a significant amount of money was collected for the relief effort. One police officer created a wood sculpture called “the wave” which was donated to the Indonesian Embassy in Germany.
- A police officer invited his partner to the police school to give a lecture, which meant the partner had to travel overnight by train to get there. He then spent several days together with the police officer and his family. A police colleague reported about this on the police website.
- Two different pairs got in contact with Radio Africa. They had a meeting and made an interview for the radio.

At the end of the Tandem® program, the results of the projects are presented at the end-of-course party. This is a very important part of the course. Participants show their products/outcomes to their colleagues and a small invited public. Among them, officials attend from the Ministry of the Interior, the UNHCR, the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, as well as local and national press. The representative from the Ministry of the Interior gives a speech highlighting the official interest in the accomplishments of the police officers and their Tandem® partners. The ICCL treats the group to a music program—for example in 2005 Roma musicians from Serbia and Romania were featured. In addition a special buffet is provided featuring interesting food. Certificates are handed out.

## EVALUATION

Participants provide both written and oral feedback to the program facilitators regarding their Tandem® program experience. But very important to the evaluation process is the informal, mainly oral, feedback. Because people don't often like to speak about their profound experiences in an organised setting, informal situations where we can get oral feedback are important. In the beginning of our program, we organised a supervision meeting at the end. The trainer, a professional and highly experienced supervisor, did not succeed in getting the group to speak about their personal transformation experiences. They were not familiar with giving this kind of feedback in this kind of setting. It was not successful.

More recently, participants from former courses have contacted ICCL and have asked for follow-up meet-

One police officer reported a significant change in a colleague who also went through the course.

“I'm in the course because my colleague was here last year. You know, since he has been here, he has changed completely. And that's why I thought this must be a good course. We had to do many deportations together. In former times we often had difficulties. Since he has been to this course, he succeeds in being friendly to the deported people and can say good-bye to them in a correct and friendly way by handshake.”

ings with their Tandem® group. This is a clear sign of the meaningful nature of the experience and the connections made. During the recent session, while the seminars were running, nearly the whole group asked to organize another seminar in the future. New police participants have reported that their colleagues recommended the course to them or that they applied repeatedly before being accepted.

As mentioned before, we hoped migrants would help train police. As it turns out, migrants have learned a lot—about police, other migrants, about themselves—through the meetings. We've come to realize that it's a training and integration program for both police officers and migrants. For both groups these kinds of exercises are new and often result in changed perspectives.

For the migrants, it's also very interesting for them to get to know people from so many other countries. They are very often isolated or have contacts just within their own close community. For example, a doctor from India and a Roma from Romania became friends during the Tandem® experience. The Indian was vegetarian and very conscious about food and health in general. The Roma was quite careless about a healthy lifestyle, especially regarding food. He liked to eat a lot of meat, which is still considered in his culture a sign of better status, and did not like vegetables, a cultural sign of poverty. One day his wife told us that he has changed his nutrition habits since becoming friends with the Indian partner. He started to eat vegetables and became conscious of having a healthy diet.

Because of the positive impact of the course, migrants reveal that they lose what has been a pervasive fear of the police—even when they need help. We get reports that migrants even avoid going to the police when they need help because of this profound fear. Those that have had bad experiences in their home countries are often frightened by police and have great difficulty overcoming this fear. When a number of migrants from the community come to know one or more police officers they learn about the problems of police and their institutional culture. These migrants can help their communities begin to overcome this fear of police and have an impact on their communities' behaviour towards the police.

### *A police officer:*

Police officers are mostly confronted with negative aspects of migration. Generally they don't get to know the positive impacts. The Tandem® experience is one.” As a superior—with 316 policemen in 16 police stations—I try to have a positive influence on my col-



leagues. Anyhow, three years ago we had more than 40 complaints in our district about the work of the police, last year there have been only 15 complaints”

### **Challenges – What to Consider Before Implementing this Tactic**

Although aspects of this program are unique to Austria, most of its elements are broadly applicable to other places, especially where police and a community want to improve understanding and relationships. In our case, we have focused on migrants. The Tandem® program could be helpful between police and other minority communities. Although we have found it very helpful to have the sponsorship and involvement of the Ministry of the Interior and to have the Tandem® program integrated into a larger police training curriculum, the program concept could be freestanding training. The funding and the support of the ministry are very important for the police as they need permission to take the course and support from their superiors.

Based on our experience, several program elements should be carefully considered.

**Selecting Participants:** It is important to have willing participants—both police and community members who would partner with police—as in our case these community members were migrants. We have found it very helpful to have a way for police to request participation. Exploring ways in which police would apply for admission to the program helps to ensure their openness and willingness to participate. Having the endorsement for the program from some high ranking police officers is extremely helpful.

**Finding community members willing to pair with police officers:** In our case, finding migrants willing to participate can be a challenge. Many migrants have had negative experiences with the police and are reluctant to become involved in something like the Tandem® program. It has been helpful to build upon relationships the facilitators have had with migrant communities. As the program continues, it is also helpful to involve previous migrant participants in the recruitment process and to have them attend more than one seminar series. They become more comfortable and more willing to become actively involved recruiting others. Some migrant participants in Vienna have helped present the Tandem® program to groups in Hungary.

**Providing compensation:** Having a stipend for migrant participants has also proved helpful to building commitment for participation as well as offsetting such expenses as transportation.

**Preparing migrants:** As was mentioned earlier, it is important to find migrant participants who speak the local language fluently, are legal residents, and have the confidence needed for full participation. It is helpful to prepare migrant participants for the program by meeting with them individually and as a group before the first session. This helps to address their concerns and to develop realistic expectations for the sessions. One thing that has been helpful is to have new migrant participants meet with migrants who were previous participants in the program. Having all participants—police as well as migrants—know what to expect in the program alleviates fears and builds the trust that is necessary for success. Facilitators should pay careful attention to these details.

**Creation of an effective setting:** Because the program is all about building intercultural understanding, tolerance, and acceptance, it is very important to consider the environment where the program takes place. It is helpful to hold the seminar sessions in a neutral and comfortable location. In Vienna, we selected a community education centre. Refreshments—beverages and fruit—are served to participants. Dress is casual—the police do not wear uniforms—and the seating arrangements are informal. Care is also taken to facilitate interaction and dialog among all the participants.

**Building Tandem® Program Pairs:** Great care is taken to build pairs that will work well together, but the process is not always perfect. In determining the pairs, attention is given to age and mobility. Other factors that could be considered might include areas of interest or family status. Despite these efforts, the pairs don't always work out smoothly. Sometimes there are other difficulties with the pairs besides just not getting along. If this happens, the facilitators intervene and switch pairs. But other problems can arise as well and facilitators must assist. For example, one migrant from Africa just disappeared. He went away and did not tell the program organizers or his police partner. This was quite upsetting to his paired police officer. There have also been some instances when the migrant says he does not have time to continue. It also happened the other way round when a police officer never had time to meet his partner. He participated actively during the common evenings, but no private meetings took place. In the end we realized that this person had a very difficult private life situation.

As was mentioned, the program provides some compensation for participation in an effort to acknowledge the individual's contribution and to keep the person engaged. Unfortunately, some drop out of the program. It sometimes happens that the situation of

the migrant changes—a new job, a change in living circumstances, etc. The lives of the police officers are much more stable and according to plan. In addition, the police officers get a professional development certificate for taking the course, and therefore it is very important to acknowledge the migrant partner's investment in the program.

**Project Management and Facilitation:** It is important to have an effective project coordinator and stable trainers that are experienced in dealing with diverse populations and fostering intercultural understanding. The project leaders must be aware of the significant amount of time that is required to recruit the participants, especially the migrant participants, to keep in touch with them, to plan and conduct the seminar sessions, to oversee and assist the pairs in their project work, and to secure the funding necessary to carry out the program. In these activities, the stability of the management team is important as is their flexibility in responding to new and unanticipated situations.

**Providing Informal Learning Situations:** Not all the learning occurs in formal sessions. The breaks at the bar and the Tandem® pair projects are essential parts of the learning and relationship-building process. The first long break is important to establish a personal contact with a partner. Partners feel responsible to each other or to be a “good partner.” It's exciting to watch how all those pairs are interacting in the bar. We at first did not suggest doing projects. However, our experiences have proven that these projects help to establish and keep contact—it gives people a common task, a common effort. The idea of projects came originally from the participants themselves, they just did a project on their own and presented it. We then realized that it was helpful to give a structure to future projects.

### TRANSPLANTING THE TACTIC

In the last several years, there has been a big interest in this tactic within Austria and in Europe. ICCL experiences suggest that it can be transplanted, but it is very important to check the different conditions in which it is embedded so that the activities are sensitive to each local context.

Each country or even each institution has a different political and social situation. For example, in the Netherlands ICCL had to explain that in Austria it is something unusual for police to be in contact with people from African or Asian countries. In the Netherlands, however, it is completely normal as many people from these groups in the population are already part of the police force.

It is possible that this tactic of Tandem® program pairing would be applicable to other cross-cultural groups that don't include police officers, such as youth and elders, doctors and patients, businessmen and workers, landowners and tenants, women and men, etc., to gain understanding and familiarity. It may be broadly applicable to many issues that have an impact on human rights.

The concept has been presented in some other European countries such as Spain in the Catalanian Police School in Barcelona, in Italy for NGOs and members of the National and Regional Police, in the Netherlands for NGOs and police, in England for the staff of a University and in Austria with different groups like teachers, an older persons association, peace organisation etc.

Last year ICCL coordinated with a Hungarian NGO who invited the Hungarian police to make a study visit to Vienna to learn about this approach. A group of four people—one NGO representative, a representative from the Hungarian Ministry, and two police officers—came to Vienna to visit the ICCL and the Austrian Ministry of Interiors to get detailed information about the project.

We held three meetings, each over a two day period—two were hosted in Budapest and one in Vienna—between the Hungarian police, migrants and refugees living in Hungary along with experienced Tandem® program pairs from Austria. It was a very effective exchange. The result was the start of a Hungarian Tandem® program. Their activities differed from our Austrian model, because they met a lot in small groups and less in pairs. This was due to their difficulties finding willing migrant participants and in communicating the idea. For the Hungarian partners the idea of cooperation between police and an NGO was a new experience.



Starting line for the Tandem® race through Budapest, Hungary using a real tandem bicycle



The trip to Hungary was a very important experience for the Austrian Tandem® program group. When we crossed the border at passport control there was no problem, however, the passports of the white people were checked quickly; the Indian's passport was checked repeatedly. One of the Austrian police officers embraced the Indian and said "Sorry that this happened to you." But his police partner reacted reservedly and said to his Indian partner "I can understand that you feel set apart but you will have to live with this. Probably I would have acted in a similar way. For well known reasons: illegal immigration." This produced a long and still ongoing discussion among the group.

In addition, the incident created a lot of interest in the media. National TV produced two reports and the Austrian Press Agency one. The largest national newspapers, regional papers, magazines and police journals printed the story.

There were a number of important highlights during the exchange between Austria and Hungary. A Palestinian refugee artist, quite isolated in Hungary, created an exhibit with the Hungarian group. The NGO found a gallery and the police transported the artwork in police cars. There were two other significant highlights in this project with Hungary: The Hungarian partners organised a tandem bicycle race through Budapest

with police protection and a football match between Hungarian police officers and Africans living in Hungary. The Austrians played with the Africans and they won the match.

These illustrations show why Tandem® program pairs develop such a deep friendship. Mostly it's a very personal feeling. For example, in one pair, the police officer had lost his mother when he was one year old when she brought him to a farm house before leaving for Canada. His partner had also lost his mother when he was born and his father said that he had brought bad luck to the family and gave the child away to others to care for. This created a deep bond between the two men. In another case, an Indian partner had studied medicine, but in Austria was not allowed to work as a doctor. The police officer wanted to study medicine but his parents urged him to become a police officer to have a secure job. These two also found a common bond.

A book was recently published in the spring of 2006, the title is "Tandem®. Police officers meet migrants. Literary protocols." In this book seven portraits of "old" Tandem® program pairs are featured by well known writers. In addition, there are portrait photographs. In March of 2006, a one-hour report about one participant was featured on national radio.

The participants themselves get engaged and make contacts with the press or a national police magazine to share their stories.

Remarks from police officers about the impact of their Tandem® experience

"Through Tandem® I have changed myself. You can see a different world, you get more understanding for refugees, you learn things you never learn usually."  
—a police officer

"I have done many seminars already, but this is the most lasting concerning follow ups that develop [and] networks ..."  
—a police officer

A discussion between two police officers:

- "In my police post nobody will use the word "nigger" any more..."
- "That's not enough. You have to go to the roots of the problem and explain why one is not allowed to say that."

"Three years ago, we had 40 complaints about the work of the police in our district, this year it was only 15."  
—a high ranking police officer

## NOTES



**For a full list of publications available in the Tactical Notebook Series, go to  
[www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org)**

Online you will also find a searchable database of tactics and other valuable tools and resources, and forums for discussion with other human rights practitioners.



The Center for Victims of Torture  
New Tactics in Human Rights Project  
717 East River Road  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 USA  
[www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org), [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org)

