

# Welcome to COYOTE 0

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## TRAINER'S REALITIES Coyote Meets Trainers

**Coyote is a curious little creature and is fond of wandering around across Europe to meet trainers in the field. Are you interested to get a picture on how your colleagues in the field of training think and feel? Then this is your section.**

### **An interview with Kristina Kovaite**

In addition to theory, philosophy and discussing training models and concepts, some effort needs to be done to explore the emotions, hopes, dreams and fears of the cowboys and -girls in the Wild West (!?) of European Training. Coyote is aware of the solitude of the European Trainer and wants to refine even more its sensitivity for the heart and soul of trainers. **Kristina Kovaite**, being tired but thrilled about her involvement in the pre-meeting of **Cocktail**, a multilateral training on international exchanges and an on the job-training for trainers

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running at the same time, was Coyote's first guest.

Kristina was born in Kaunas, is 26 and works and lives in Vilnius, Lithuania. While working on her Masters in Business Administration, she enjoyed her involvement in the International Association for Students in Economics and Management (AIESEC), where she experienced for the first time the power of international exchanges. Currently working for the Baltic Partners for Change Management, she is training in the fields of learning by doing, organisational development and management, training of trainers, intercultural communication and learning and youth work. Being a former member of the Advisory Committee at the Youth

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Directorate in Strasbourg, she was able to explore the field of training at national and international level. So she is active in the youth field and the business world.

### **Coyote:**

The world of business and the youth field....talking about culture shock and intercultural learning?!!

### **Kristina:**

Yes, but as every strange combination of people and views, it delivers at the same time frustrating and funny but always interesting situations. For example a seminar on strategic business management for top and middle management with loads of work experience, and there you have me... a 20 years old girl who could have been their daughter. They looked at me like at a giraffe in the zoo. It took them half a day to accept me. The world of business administration focuses mainly on the manipulation of people. The result they want to get is profit, and only this. There is not a lot of space for human factors. Training in that field I see that people act differently because of their roots and I do see the richness of that, but the participants remain too profit-focussed. Companies do not look at societies, only at companies and that is an obstacle for training.

**Coyote:**

Every horse in the Wild West (!?) has its name...Jolly Jumper for example gives a pretty clear view of the personality we are looking at. Trying to see you a bit clearer: what horoscope sign would you find to fit you best as a trainer?

**Kristina:**

Aquarius looks fine to me. It is a sign which doesn't go to total extremes. I always try to find a common way to do things. Tolerance and respect are his tools. And the water-element takes away the sharpness and destructiveness which can sometimes be harmful in communication between people.

**Coyote:**

Aquarius is as well the sign of the age we are pretty close to. But there is still a millennium bug to deal with. What can be unexpected pitfalls in training others in international fields? The Seven Deadly Sins in Training, let's say...

**Kristina:**

I would like to start with gluttony. 'Give me, give me, give me'... being more a danger for participants than for trainers. European training is perceived as a resource centre and the trainer as the one who gives. Participants' needs are often very high and there are not enough training opportunities.

Pride strikes when you consider participants as disturbing and your training course as good in itself, a bit like the tradition of formal education where a teacher considers himself to be on a higher level than the participants, the 'I know I am the trainer' attitude.

If you spread around the message 'I am the best', than you leave no space for people to improve themselves. On the contrary, participants will create a common enemy, because you leave no space for active participation. This, I would consider to be vanity.

I see people in this field who are more respected than me. And this makes me look at what I would like to achieve. The feeling of envy is normal but you need the courage to deal with this need for improvement, achievement and acknowledgement - because that is what envy really is - in a constructive way.

It is very easy to be lazy as a trainer and the copy-paste temptation for example is very much there. The risk is that your creative thinking and development stops. When you're trapped in sloth, you should ask yourself what motivates you to be trainer.

**Coyote:**

What about lust ?

**Kristina:**

That is a difficult one. Hmm, I am human, not a god.

**Coyote:**

Being a human, you must experience training needs yourself?

**Kristina:**

A lot....it is difficult to make a list. This is a good exercise by the way. I still want to improve my communication skills in intercultural environments. I do believe I need more knowledge and a structured way of thinking and reflecting about my experiences as a trainer.

**Coyote:**

Imagine that once a year all trainers involved in European training could meet. What would you put on the agenda for this meeting?

**Kristina:**

I can imagine that there is so much richness in this group that I would keep the agenda as flexible as possible. For me the main questions would be the trends, changes and innovations in the different countries. I would like to see how informal education is developing throughout Europe. It would be interesting to exchange methodologies, tackle new areas of intercultural learning and to get information on the different training projects which are running.

**Coyote:**

What are your dadas as a trainer?

**Kristina:**

I can not, simply not at all, keep my mouth shut about long term exchanges: I consider living abroad for a longer period as a main tool for self improvement.

**Coyote:**

What are your taboos as a trainer?

**Kristina:**

Religion, politics and sexual orientation: Topics that are so personal and potential areas of conflicts. I believe we have enough conflicts as it is. I do not mind confrontation, but in discussions without a perspective of solution or no willingness to compromise, then you better avoid the subject.

**Coyote:**

What is the main challenge in the training that you are involved in at the moment?

**Kristina:**

I am involved in the Cocktail Project, which is partly about training youth workers for international exchanges but at the same time training the trainers. Our work as trainers in a multinational team is used as a learning process for ourselves and this is dealt with explicitly during prep-meetings, the training and in evaluation meetings. We put lots of efforts in that aspect, but I can see already now that it is very useful.

**Coyote:**

Our cultural backgrounds influence us in the way we think and behave. Looking at Lithuania, can you state explicitly how your background influences you as a trainer?

**Kristina:**

Yes, for sure. We were quite a conservative Catholic country and this made me very value-oriented. Our conscience is well developed, let's say. And it is rooted and very deep and thus present in daily communications. Somehow I believe this orientation on values like tolerance makes it easier to involve people in training. But you should be aware of the fact that participants look at how a trainer is behaving. He creates ground rules for communication and he is a model at the same time. On the other hand, stressing tolerance all the time...It could be good to be more proactive sometimes. I don't know if it is good or bad. But I see it.

**Coyote:**

Are young people in Lithuania interested to participate in training and why?

**Kristina:**

Looking at youth organisations, we need training in systematic thinking, organisational development, the philosophy of the organisation and activities. Not only the how but the whys. There is a need of experience of other countries. They have always been interested in what is happening. They need to be sure that the ideas are realistic, that you can implement them, that they have results. The how, we can deal with. Lithuanian young people have the feeling that they have something to offer taking part in European training but they have difficulties to express themselves. There are a lot of unexploited ideas in Lithuania because for lots of years there was no possibility to implement the ideas they had. Now they have a space. The ideas come like a waterfall but they need the space to verbalise them. The culture itself used to be closed, there was no international communication, looking how civilisations develop in other countries.

**Coyote:**

How do they experience the methodology in training?

**Kristina:**

There is not a lot of tradition in our country thus it is new and interesting. Participants from our kind of background are more active than those who have a long tradition in active participation. The main reason probably is that it was forbidden for a long time, so people are really interested because it is new and challenging... Young people are always the first ones that get what is new. Other youngsters take it as a normal thing to be promoted to participate. They have been doing it since childhood. For Lithuanian young people it is still a challenge.

Participation and the possibility to learn through your and others' experience makes training different from other kinds of education. Training is a more informal way which makes people more relaxed, more secure. They know that nobody is going to get punished, there is no exam. There is no possibility not to pass. People are more safe, more open, more willing to learn new things. And this is a big and an extra value. The main result is that people can learn and absorb as much as possible. In formal education there is a top down structure: others decide for you what you should learn.

**Coyote:**

What would you consider to be the role of the trainer?

**Kristina:**

I try to achieve that there is no big difference between us and the participants. The only thing is that we play a different role. We are here to give them possibilities to learn. They come with their experiences. You can create the situation that you don't learn from them, but I try to avoid this. We can learn from each other but we have different roles and it is necessary to understand why we are here. I spend a lot of time to make people understand what they can expect from me as a trainer. That makes training people so attractive, each time you are learning quite a lot.

**Coyote:**

Thank you very much, Kristina.

**The interview was conducted by Leen Laconte.**

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## **FOOTNOTES:**

- (1) The "Cocktail – Project" is organised by the Heinrich Pesch Haus (an educational centre in Ludwigshafen, Germany) in cooperation with National Agencies from the Youth for Europe programme. Funded under Action BII, the project has two main aims: to train participants to run exchanges and to train the trainers who are organising the training courses. So far, two courses have been organised in Germany and Flanders - it is hoped to run a third course in Portugal this autumn.
- (2) The Advisory Committee of the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation was composed of representatives of National Youth Councils and International Youth Organisations and a part of the decision making structures in the Youth Directorate. It has this year been replaced by an Advisory Council, which is composed of representatives of NYCs and INGYOs and some other structures working in the youth field.