

# My Story

*Our lives are shaped by experience. However we are marked by some experiences or events more than by others. This activity compares the experiences and explores the diversity and similarities within the group.*

## Issues addressed

- Life stories
- Cultural diversity
- Things that influence participants' lives related to their country, culture, religion or family.

## Aims

- To raise curiosity and empathy about the other participants' cultures
- To generate a critical approach to our own history
- To create awareness of the diversity of European history
- To help participants to know each other better.

## Preparation

- A calendar on a board or large sheet of paper. It should be marked off in years and start at the year of birth of the oldest participant and end at the present.
- Felt-tip pen

**Time:** 30 minutes - 1 hour

**Group Size:** Any

## Instructions

1. Ask each participant to think about 3 'public' events that have marked their lives and then ask them to write their name against the year in which the events occurred. The events may be related to politics, history, sports, music etc.
2. Then ask people to say why those dates are important, what they stand for and why they have chosen them.

## Discussion and debriefing

Invite participants to say if they were surprised or shocked by any of the dates or events and whether were they familiar with all of them.

It also may be interesting to discuss how and why we attach importance to some events rather than to others.

## Tips for the facilitator

This activity works with any group and is also a very good starter on a residential.

If you are working with a local group this activity helps participants realise that, even though they may live in the same street, people often attach different degrees of importance to the same events. It may also be interesting to



notice that some particular event has marked a majority of the participants regardless of their origin or educational background - we are "all equal".

In a multi-cultural group, the activity is useful to raise curiosity about our recent past and cultural influences and, to encourage people to have greater respect each other's beliefs and convictions.

The calendar can be made more colourful or lively if participants add a picture (a Polaroid picture will do very well) or a drawing of themselves against their birth date.

In a seminar, training course or residential pin the calendar up where it can stay for the whole duration and be referred to at different times.

This activity follows on well from 'My childhood' (page 127).

### **Suggestions for follow up**

We are shaped not only by where we live and by events, but also by our families and their history. How much do you know about where your parents and grandparents came from? You may feel yourself to be Hungarian or Spanish - or whatever - but you may be quite a mixture of nationalities. Find out more using 'Tree of Life' (page 173)