



# National Report on Symbol work

Germany

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## GERMANY

### Annex 2 - Generic Framework for Symbol work



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## Tradition and understanding of Symbols

The tradition and understanding of symbols should carefully be considered when planning to do Symbol work in a professional context with young people and disseminate this innovative counselling method.

### What is a symbol?

In the symbols emotions, moods, atmospheres, valuations, experiences and insights are interwoven. The visible, the tangible, the audible, the perceptible, the tangible (...) refer to the invisible.

**Symbols condense the past and capture the future.**

(Coaching als kreativer Prozess, Kurt F. Richter)

In general encyclopedias, symbol is defined as "a sign indicating a deeper meaning and (...) an effective sign for a concept or process, often without a recognizable connection with this " (example: Blue Flower) [...]

"Symbols express the content of a given object in **its expressive power.**"

([www.wortwuchs.net/stilmittel/symbol/](http://www.wortwuchs.net/stilmittel/symbol/))

Examples are the Christian symbols or the white dove as a symbol of peace.

**In general:**

A single symbol can be connected with different meanings, omens, complex processes or even convictions like religions or politics. It could be meaningless or very powerful for a single person as well as for a certain group of people.

Symbols always have a personal meaning. You can never know what they stand for to other people. The individual associations are due to complex influences like cultural, social, religious or regional belongings, experiences and individual aspects. But there is also often a general meaning of a symbol, depending on use and understanding in a certain region, culture and decade.

In tradition-leading cultures the symbols are directly effective, they need no interpretation. However, we are living in a time **when symbolic cultures are decaying.**

Instead of the historically anchored symbolic symbols, short-lived group and individual symbols occur.

(Coaching als kreativer Prozess, Kurt F. Richter)

The ring on our finger is a common symbol which can represent the promise of marriage to another person or the membership to a certain kind of confederation (like a signet ring). The ring is a very old symbol and like the white dove there is common accepted meaning of it. But it could also represent the power, a membership to a family or a certain emotion for a single person.

As presented before, there are symbols with a special meaning for certain groups of people (like certain labels in sport or subcultures) or with certain meanings in one cultural context. For example in Senegal the left hand represents impurity. You would never touch the head of a child with your left hand.

There are also symbols which are perceived as the announcement of a bad incident or which incorporate complex processes. A black cat coming from the right side represents disaster for example or bread and wine in the Christian religion stand for the belief in God, the community, commitment or power.

A more modern example of a symbol is a lock with the names or initials of the two lovers on it on bridges, currently very famous in Cologne.

## In literature

All the definitions of the symbol have in common  
**that the symbol points beyond itself**  
to interpret something else, abstract,  
which can not be directly represented.

(<http://www.litde.com/jugendlexikon-literatur/symbol.php>)

### Literary epochs:

Apart from that, literary periods and styles differ considerably in the understanding and use of symbols. The classic expresses its philosophical-aesthetic ideas in symbols, for the romance they pointed to inexplicable secrets; in the course of the nineteenth century the claim was abandoned to create sufficient symbolic systems over the visible reality. In some works of this time, symbols became the center of the action. Thus, for instance, in Anette von Droste-Hülshoff's book 'Die Judenbuche', published in 1842.

There are many different themes or symbols used in Literature, below you will find a few examples of the many symbols used in Literature.

Colors often play a role in stories. Usually they represent emotions like love, anger, or sadness. Red is a passionate color that can symbolize love, anger, or passion. Blue can mean tranquility, peace, sadness, and in some cases fear.

Water is one of the most overused tools in Literature. It can be religious, like baptism, it can mean purification, or it can even mean death (in instances like drowning). Light is used for truth, enlightenment, safety, or it can be used as a holy image. Light can stand for the side of 'good' in a novel or 'power.' It is used to overpower evil or even bring forth knowledge to a character or the narrator.

(<https://clutchink.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/7-ommon-symbols-in-literature/>)

## The symbolic concept of Goethe

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who has repeatedly explained the function of symbols for literature, regarded symbols as an "idea in the picture", in such a way that the idea which can be seen in it cannot be understood and expressed outside the symbol. ([www.litde.com/jugendlexikon-literatur/symbol.php](http://www.litde.com/jugendlexikon-literatur/symbol.php))

Goethe's theory of the symbol was decisive for the romantic symbolic concept (and the resulting "symbol strife"). Goethe conceived the symbol as an "unlocking force", "which in particular can represent the universal (and in general the particular)" and bounded it as in its infinite.

"Symbolism transforms the phenomenon into idea, the idea into a picture, so that the idea in the image always remains infinitely effective and unattainable and **remains unspeakable, even in all languages.**"

(<https://clutchink.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/7-common-symbols-in-literature/>)

## In religion

**"Every "religious language" is essentially symbolic,**  
because religion mostly refers  
to transcendence and therefore exceeds all the superficial."  
(Paul Tillich)

All religions express central thoughts in symbols, for example the wheel (as a symbol of eternal recurrence), the cross (as a symbol of the suffering and death of Jesus, but also of reconciliation with God), the path (as a symbol of life history Or life guidance), the Islamic star and the Crescent. Religious symbols are constitutive elements of religious identification, language, and actions.

([www.wortwuchs.net/stilmittel/symbol/](http://www.wortwuchs.net/stilmittel/symbol/))

Allegory transforms the phenomenon into a concept, the concept into a picture, but so that the concept in the image is still limited and complete, and to have and to be expressed in the same. / [...] It is a great difference whether the poet looks for the general or the general in particular. Allegory arises out of this kind, where the special is only an example, an example of the universal; The latter, however, is really the

nature of poetry; it expresses a particular thing without thinking or pointing to the universal. Whoever now captures the special is at once received the universal without being aware of it, or only at a later stage. "(Maxims und Reflexionen 749-751) (<https://clutchink.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/7-common-symbols-in-literature/>).

### **In our daily life**

we are surrounded by symbols. There are logical symbols like %, = or?, traffic symbols, symbols in the forest (signs for trekking routes), symbols in and on our clothes and jewelry, logos in commercials, on cell phones or laptops. We associate special meanings with flowers, animals, trees etc. or in daily actions like shaking hands or waving.

### **In daily life of our target group: the young people**

In the daily life of young people symbols are widely spread. There are special clothes like baseball caps, band-t-shirts, trousers like baggies or hair color, glasses, which stand for the membership to a certain subculture (like emos, heavies, hipsters) or peer group.

There are labels like Nike, Benetton or Element (skater clothes), jewelry like the Christian cross, graffiti tags with the last three numbers of a postal code or the initials of group members, codes like 187 (in America a code for a dead cop, in Germany a synonym for the revolt against authorities as well as a name of a hip hop band) or very common symbols like the face of Che Guevara or Bob Marley, the leaf of a cannabis plant, the tattoo of an Anker, heart or skull.

## Our primary target group of young people

In our diverse projects we work with young people who have huge educational and integration requirements.

Due to very different and complex reasons these juveniles have problems with their personal, social and vocational integration and need intensive support and counseling. Due to the low-threshold, client- and resource orientated approach, working with symbols suits our young clients and the concept of Sozialwerk Düren very well.

In our projects we accompany for example the group of pupils (14 – 18 years old). They have problems managing the challenges in regular secondary schools. One innovative project for these young people is our “lern.punkt”- a project for young people with special support requirements because of social conditions like migration or exclusion.

Another field of our work is the vocational preparation for young adults. Here we offer projects with different intensity and duration. After ending school they have difficulties finding jobs due to different reasons, for example private problems, social anxieties or low self-assurance. Flanking to our counseling and coaching proposals we enable them experiences in eight craftsman’s trades to make them job-ready. Primarily we want to engage students and participants of our various educational projects. Also we want to enable other institutions to work with Symbol work.

We will carry out workshops in single projects. To bring the participants Symbol work closer we will start with low threshold interventions, for example the participants should choose a symbol for their personal goals or themes i.e. “What are my personal and my professional strengths” and explain this symbol and the meaning to the group. Then we announce to them the interventions or ask one of them if they want to try an intervention form. If nobody wants to try then one possibility would be to show the intervention with a colleague or a trainee.

We have already started to work with symbols in three projects and the experience shows that the young people easily accept the offer. In some projects we have counseling processes with single students. When an intervention fits to their needs we propose these interventions. Stefan Henke works in a secondary school as a social worker and some pupils choose the intervention of “the islands of emotions”. It does not need long explications for young people to understand the idea of the Symbol work and the material is self explanatory.



In our project “springboard” we announced the “planning road- who am I and what I am able to do” and the participants seemed hesitant to work with it themselves. We exemplify the intervention with a trainee. After it one of the participants expressed the desire to work with this intervention. Other participants explained that they want to think about the offer.



## Similar methods and possible Synergies

In the course of the preparation of SymfoS and the stakeholder analyses we spoke with many professionals working in the field of counseling and coaching young people in transition school work or neighboring fields in our region.

We spoke with the counselors from Sozialwerk Düren, teachers and a director (Realschule Wernersstraße/ Düren- Ms Völmmecke, MsRoels and Mr. Momma), social workers in Düren and Cologne, decision makers in youth welfare of the government (for example Manfred Kahl- District youth attorneys in Cologne-Kalk) , systemically family- Counselors and (hypno-) therapists (Dörte Hochgrebe/ surgery Mackert pediatric psychiatry in Cologne), we discussed with social work students in Mönchengladbach and the participants of an trans-regional training in the field of child protection (cooperation of BIS Bildungsakademie, the Institute für soziale Arbeit e.V. (ISA) and Deutscher Kinderschutzbund Landesverband (DKSB) NRW e.V .).

Additionally we have longtime professional experience in numerous projects in this field.

In various approaches it is usual to work with imaginations, pictures, compilations or time lines, but we could not find any example of work with symbols in the career guidance. To work with three- Dimensional and touchable symbols is not usual in the region of Düren and also in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. In neighbouring fields of counselling, like in trainings to review learning types or in therapy, there are some interventions in the psycho drama, systemically or Hypno- therapeutic-approaches or the Gestalt therapy.

A colleague (Waldemar Karpenko, w.karpenko@sozialwerk-dueren.de) participates in training where the clients verify either the use of written information or of symbols to facilitate their learning process. In Hypno-therapy so called impact techniques, for example a touchable „book of lives“ (you-tube: Dani Beaulieu) or intervention in the systemically approach like the family board with additional symbols.

Various interventions within the use of symbols and also buddy approaches exist in psychodrama or Gestalt therapy. We spoke with Maria Saurbier- Schmalen- Supervisor and systemically family- Counselors in Düren and Cologne and find in literature reports of it. For example the group members choose symbols according to the client who has to interpret the symbols her- or him self with words or action. (Coaching als kreativer Prozess, Kurt F. Richter and Psychodrama, Von Ameln, Gerstman, Kramer)

One peer-buddy-system is used in cases of mobbing in schools in a certain grade in Düren. Over the course of several years a good-working-network of NGOs, government and schools has been established in the field of violence prevention. The no-blame-approach for example is well known and practiced as well as the approach of media-scouts. Pupils use both approaches as multiplier or companions for peers or younger pupils.

# Validation of the SymfoS Learning Outcomes

## Level 1: Validation of the train-the-trainer course

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a tool for transparency, comparability, and translation that makes it possible to compare and understand the various national qualifications throughout Europe. It covers the entire education and training system, from general and vocational training and continuing education to higher education and non-formal and informal learning. The purpose of the EQF and its classification into eight reference levels is to serve as a reference framework for the education systems of member states for mapping their national qualifications.

The EQF acts as a translation tool. The **DQR- Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen** is intended to make qualifications of the German education system comparable to the EQF across Europe. The DQR is assigned at the individual levels to those qualifications which can be expected to be linked to the learning outcomes described above due to quality standards. The DQR describes professional and personal skills on eight levels, which are based on the classification of the qualifications.

The DQR, like the EQF, provides for eight levels, which are characterized by different descriptive categories. The structure refers the learning outcomes associated with a qualification to the professional and personal development of the individual (competency - personal competence), and clarifies the alignment of all learning outcomes achieved with the competent action under conditions of defined requirements structures (described in the level indicator) ). The DQR distinguishes two categories of competencies: "competency" divided into "skills" and "skills", and "personal competence" divided into "social competence and self-reliance" ("four-pillar structure"). Since the DQR is used throughout, the use of the modal verbs "can" in the matrix has been dispensed with. Each DQR level can be achieved on different educational paths.

To clarify the possibilities and requirements of the DQR respectively to the Validation of SymfoS- Trainer we contact the responsible national service: [bmbf-kontaktformular@bmbf.bund.de](mailto:bmbf-kontaktformular@bmbf.bund.de) [mailto:bmbf-kontaktformular@bmbf.bund.de]

We got an answer from Irene Kurz, Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung (F-bb) gemeinnützige GmbH, BBJ Consult AG, Bessemerstr. 82, 12103 Berlin, Fon: +49 30 814068121, E-Mail: [kurz@bbj.de](mailto:kurz@bbj.de).

Concerning SymfoS Frau Kurz explained that the train-the-trainer-qualification conforms to a qualification in the non formal range. In contrast to the formal range (all qualifications that are assigned from the state)

it is not quite clear that the qualifications in the non-formal range guarantee a total legal capacity and for the moment there are no standards to evaluate the qualification in the non- formal range. She recommends describing the skills, which are learned in the training. If it fits, maybe it is possible to assign these skills to one of the levels of the DQR.

## Level 2: Validation for the Young People taking part in the SymfoS training

The participants of SymfoS (like in all projects of Erasmus+ ) have the right to receive recognition for their participation and learning in the projects. We will establish a certification complementary to the standards of youth pass.

## Recommended Literature:

- Kurt f. Richter. Coaching als kreativer Prozess: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010
- Dr. F. von Ameln, R. Gerstmann, Dr. J. Kramer. Psychdrama: Springer, 2005
- Arist von Schlippe, Jochen Schweitzer. Lehrbuch der systemischen Therapie und Beratung: Verlag: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003
- W. Schneider, Wo Sprache nicht ausreicht, beginnt die Arbeit mit Symbolen. Symbole als Hoffnung oder "Es ist alles schon da. Du musst es nur finden", [www.psychologische-symbolarbeit.de/](http://www.psychologische-symbolarbeit.de/)
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung; EQR und DQR, <http://www.dqr.de/content/2323.php>
- BBJ Unternehmensgruppe, DQR, [www.bbj.de](http://www.bbj.de)
- [www.no-blame-approach.de](http://www.no-blame-approach.de) - Ohne Schuldzuweisung und Sanktion
- Danie Beaulieu, Academie Impact, [www.academieimpact.com/en/danie-beaulieu.php](http://www.academieimpact.com/en/danie-beaulieu.php)
- Wortwuchs, Dein Deutschportal, [www.wortwuchs.net/stilmittel/symbol/](http://www.wortwuchs.net/stilmittel/symbol/)
- Clutch ink, 7 common symbols in literature, <https://clutchink.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/7-common-symbols-in-literature/>
- Jugendlexikon, Literatur, <http://www.litde.com/jugendlexikon-literatur/symbol.php>

## Annex 1: Field Research & Interview Partner

<b>DATE</b>	<b>INTERVIEW PARTNER / INSTITUTION</b>	<b>TOPIC / ACTIVITY &amp; OUTCOMES</b>
25.11.2016	40 participants of an workshop from different institution all over the state North Rhine-Westphalia in Gelsenkirchen- numerous decision makers from BIS Bildungsakademie, the Institute für soziale Arbeit e.V. (ISA) and Deutscher Kinderschutzbund Landesverband (DKSB) NRW e.V . ; contact: Katrin Tönnissen; <a href="mailto:k.toennissen@bis-akademie.de">k.toennissen@bis-akademie.de</a> ; <a href="http://www.bis-akademie.de">www.bis-akademie.de</a>	Symbol work in the field of child protection and counselling- possibilities and boundaries, well known practise of Symbol work in counselling, coaching, therapies
24.11.2016	15 students of social work in Mönchengladbach Hochschule Niederrhein; contact Claudia Bundschuh; <a href="mailto:Claudia.Bundschuh@hs-niederrhein.de">Claudia.Bundschuh@hs-niederrhein.de</a>	Introduction of Symbol work and discussion about versatility in the field of counselling and social group work
22.11.2016	School social worker/ municipal office; City of Düren, social welfare in schools, contact: Katrin Malig; <a href="mailto:kc.malig@dueren.de">kc.malig@dueren.de</a>	Possibilities and versatility of Symbol work in social work in school and attempt an idea of intervention of basic clearing
19.11.2016	Trainer of Symbol work and her colleagues in the field of logopedics/ AWO Siegen e.V.; contact: Sarah Schütze	attempt and advancement of an idea of intervention of basic clearing
1.10.-31.11.16	Colleagues from Sozialwerk- manager, counsellor, supervisor, master craftsman/ Sozialwerk Dürener Christen e.V. ; <a href="http://www.sozialwerk-dueren.de">www.sozialwerk-dueren.de</a>	well known practise of Symbol work in counselling, coaching or similar fields
1.10.-31-11.16	Students and participants from our projects	Symbols in their daily live, introduction of Symbol work, exploration of interests
17.11.2016	Systemic family councils in cologne/ surgery of child therapist Mackert; contact: Dörte Hochgrebe, E- Mail: <a href="mailto:dorte73@gmx.net">dorte73@gmx.net</a>	practise of Symbol work in counselling and therapy: Hypnosis- therapies and systemically approach
15.11.2016	Teachers of secondary schools; for example: Ms Voellmecke, Ms Roels from Realschule Wernersstraße	Possibilities and versatility of Symbol work in transition school job
04.10.2016	Directors of secondary schools; contact Mr. Momma, <a href="mailto:h.h.eschen@rsw-dueren.de">h.h.eschen@rsw-dueren.de</a>	Possibilities and versatility of Symbol work in transition school job and counselling

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