A cluster initiative:
Youth Empowered by Skills!

Youth Empowered by Skills
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The issue of youth employment remains a top priority on the European agenda. With nearly 5.4 million young people unemployed, there is urgency and the European Union is firmly committed to investing in its youth.

European actions are focused on three priorities: firstly focusing on education and training for successful entry into employment; improving professional integration into the world of work; and finally supporting employment and entrepreneurship amongst young people.

Thanks to its political skills shared with the Member States in these fields, the EU has developed ambitious packages aimed at all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

Thus, the Youth Guarantee, adopted in April 2013 by the EU Member States, has a budget of € 6 billion. Eventually, all young people will be offered a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or training in the four months following the end of their schooling or job loss.

Indeed, the European Union is particularly attentive to the situation of young people who are not in education and have no professional occupation. The Initiative for Youth Employment, co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) has a budget of 6 billion euros for the period 2014-2020.

Finally, to enhance the employability of young people, the new Erasmus + expands mobility at all levels of training through a budget increased by 40%, which totals nearly 15 billion euros for the period 2014-2020.

Encouraging mobility is incidentally one of the objectives of the Operational Programme of the Two Seas which implements enhanced cross-border cooperation between Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Targeting the economic development of the 2Seas region, this European program supports many initiatives that improve accessibility and attractiveness of the regions within France, Belgium, The Netherlands and England. It is in this context and through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) that the cluster Youth Empowered by Skills-YES! was set up.

The YES! cluster is the combined effort of local partners involved with young people at distance from the labour market. By providing them with opportunities for cross-border mobility, the teams actually help young people to strengthen their social and professional skills and ultimately their employability.

This book is intended for all those who are involved with young people and enable them to bounce back after an initial failure at an early stage of their active life. I wish on this occasion to congratulate all the partners of the YES! cluster for the high quality of their work and wish them much success.

Anne HOUTMAN,
Head of Representation of the European Commission in France
Introduction

The YES! cluster deals with cross-border cooperation, the promotion of mobility employment, and social inclusion - in short - the empowerment of EU youth.

“Empowerment is a state that is achieved when and where individuals and communities have the options necessary to end, mitigate or adapt threats to their human, environmental and social rights; have the capacity and freedom to exercise these options; and actively participate in pursuing these options” (O’Brien et al., 2008: 6).

At the most basic level, empowerment is about attaining the power to make choices. In this case, we will deal with the concept of youth empowerment. We should realize first, that in this case, this implicitly acknowledges and assumes a lack of, or differential in, power or capacity. As such, empowerment is fundamentally about human rights (Jouve, 2009).

Empowerment as a relational concept reflects the fact that some individuals or social groups have been deprived and marginalized in some way or another, and can or should be mobilized to obtain what they heretofore lacked, because only if there is a prior lack of power is empowerment even possible or necessary. The reason for this lack could be determined in today’s economic crisis in the European Union explained in the next section “EU YOUTH TODAY”.
EU Youth today

Weak labour markets have seen long-term unemployment rising in most Member States and to an all-time high in the EU. Structural unemployment and labour market mismatches have been growing. Net job destruction has been coinciding with an increase in precarious jobs even though, compared to before the crisis, the share of temporary contracts has fallen in the EU as they bore the brunt of the downturn. Part-time jobs, especially involuntary/forced part-time jobs, have been increasing.

With an EU average unemployment rate of 23 %, the threat to the future of many (young) people, remains acute. This means that nearly a quarter of the EU population is at risk of poverty or exclusion. Growing social distress in employment and poverty are the result of the crisis and the lack of resilience of the labour market and social institutions(1). The EU youth is also one of the groups that experiences the most extreme difficulties to stay motivated to find (or keep) a study direction or job within this crisis. They require help to minimize this damage. Since 2009, the increasing share of young people not in employment, education or training was mainly driven by the rise of youth unemployment (2): nearly 7.5 million people aged 15 to 24 are currently neither in employment, education nor training (NEET).

With a more optimistic outlook, this crisis can also be considered as an opportunity to strengthen the EU youth by offering them new opportunities in this case and empowerment via soft skills. The cluster project YES! originated from the collaboration between 2Seas projects and operates within the Europe 2020 strategy, which focuses on the development of smart growth, sustainability and inclusion. More specifically, this project fits into the framework of the initiative "Youth on the Move", promoting training, education and employment of young people within the EU.

EU average unemployment rate is 23%

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(1) Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2014:13  (2) Ibid 2014:27
The YES! Consortium

The partnership of the YES! Cluster within the Interreg 2 Seas Programme consists of several European organizations all participating separately to strengthen youth in many different ways.

The Association for the Development of Citizen and European Initiatives (ADICE), from Roubaix (France) is the lead partner of the YES! cluster and worked on the GAPS project that aimed to fight against unemployment in the 2 Seas area by offering cross-border and local internships to young people.

From the UK, CSV was involved in the VXM project and their vision is to have a society in which everyone can participate to build strong and inclusive communities.

VET colleges (Vocational Education and Training) Syntra West from Belgium and Scalda from The Netherlands worked together with Dutch knowledge centre Pro Work on the iLaebor project, focused on ‘Investing in Labor and Education in Border Regions’.

UK Dictionary

em•pow•er [em-pou-er] verb (used with object) to give power or authority to; authorize, especially by legal or official means.

skill [skil] noun
1. the ability, coming from one’s knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well. competent excellence in performance.
2. a craft, trade, or job requiring manual dexterity or special training in which a person has competence and experience.
Origins of the cluster

The cluster partners originate from four 2Seas projects:

**GAPS (Graduate and Apprenticeship Placement Scheme)** aimed at enhancing and improving employment within the 2Seas area by developing new skills and strategies for young people. The project gathered together 7 partners in England, France and Holland, each facing rising youth unemployment rates. One of the main activities was to propose crossborder work placements of up to 3 months, which included language training, promoting the value of such an exercise to both young people and employers; ADICE was part of this project.

For more information, please visit: www.adice.asso.fr

**iLaebor’s (‘Investing in Labor and Education in Border Regions’) central objective** was to promote the connection between vocational education and the labour market for individuals with multiple disadvantages. The main objectives were to create an inventory and analysis of the available tools for assessment, guidance and coaching of the target group, employers and teachers within the educational institutions and to coach 90 individuals from the target group actively towards the labour market using the (further) developed tools.

PRO-WORK, SCALDA, SYNTRA-WEST were part of this project.

For more information, please visit:
- Pro-Work: www.pro-work.nl
- Scalda: www.scalda.nl
- Syntra-West: www.syntrawest.be

**VxM** promoted experience-based media education, literacy, participation, production and dissemination initiatives by connecting cross-border media centres and a virtual youth community platform, targeted at 16 to 25 year olds. It had particular foci on social inclusion, cultural identity and local empowerment.

CSV was part of this project.

For more information, please visit:
- CSV: www.mediaclubhouse.org.uk

The associated partner is Howest University College from Kortrijk, Belgium, who was part of the SeaMedia 2 Seas project. Collaborating across borders, young people worked with professional broadcasters and academics to create content for the platform. This allowed to enhance the employment opportunities within the target group, by offering young people real-world experience of media production and development.

For more information, please visit: www.seame.tv
Objectives of the cluster: promoting mobility and innovative educational tools

Though this cluster aims at promoting mobility, innovative educational tools and employment, the term “mobility” has taken different meanings with the partners, not only due to different translations initially, but also because of the different situations it covers:

1. Mobility was at first understood as international mobility, especially due to the experience in this field of the lead partner. International mobility is then defined as the movement of people from one country to another for internships, jobs or volunteering purposes. This was the main aim of this cluster: to create opportunities of international mobility as an informal way to acquire professional, social and economic competencies. When thinking about the impact of mobility, we could quickly begin with the following principle: going abroad and experiencing another country is an extraordinary opportunity to step outside one’s everyday life. It allows for distance from and new perspectives on one’s ordinary life. It also gives one the chance to escape what can feel like a predestined existence and to try to see things that might have seem reserved for the privileged few before.

2. Mobility is thus the ability to move freely and easily: mobility means simply getting out of the community, opening oneself to the outside world and confronting oneself with the rest of the world. This is a way to discover other cultures and to take some distance from our own community, habits, culture. It also gives one the chance to escape what can feel like a predestined existence and to try to see things that might have seem reserved for the privileged few before.

3. Mobility is thus the ability to move between different levels in society or employment: it is the chance for youngsters with fewer opportunities to find a job, despite their different pathways.

The cluster revolves around these three concepts of mobility. It considers alternative pathways to employment for youngsters at distance from the labour market is necessary to create new opportunities, new hopes and a new future for NEET young people.

Mobility is thus a three-fold concept that is a logical corollary to the concept of empowerment.

The concept of empowerment is the main idea behind the tools developed by the partners during their 2Seas projects. This cluster gave them the opportunity to share those tools, to improve them and to create a model of action to enhance the employability of youngsters with fewer opportunities, putting the three definitions of mobility at the heart of their reflection.
Publication content

First the importance of empowerment will be explained, together with a description of the Empowerment model set up by the cluster. Then, five chapters will be dedicated to detailing parts of this model, focusing on the tools shared by the partners. Then, the opportunities, impact and future developments will be described. The YES Partnership hopes to educate you further on this subject and to encourage you to strengthen the EU youth of today!
1.1 - General introduction to the YES! model

The graphic above represents the main output of the cluster: a toolbox presenting different pathways for unemployed young people and that aims at being integrated by all partners’ organisations.

Phase 1 of the YES! Cluster started in November 2013. During this period, all the partners assessed their way of working, exchanged best practices, identified their most prominent and relevant tools and presented them to the partners.

The method

The work of the cluster consisted of mutually enriching our tools to result in what we believe are levers towards employment for young people (and especially NEET people):

- Individual accompaniment
- Step-by-step methods
- Personalized guidance
- Alternative training for youngsters at distance from the labour market, often far from traditional measures and institutions.
Unemployed young people should benefit from a “competence assessment”, called TDI – Talent Development Instrument – focusing equally on the educational background as on human and social competences. Obstacles to employment are often linked to competencies that are difficult to measure, yet very attractive for employers, such as team work, open-mindedness and critical awareness.

ILaebor’s partners have created a database, the TDI, allowing the compiling of one’s competencies and the proposing of an individual step-by-step approach, specific to each profile. This database acts as a prescriber and allows follow-up and proper guidance for young people. With this tool, the youngster is oriented toward three pathways:

- Formal education training through internships and entrepreneurship, developed by Scalda through iLaebor, that empowers young people by making them actors of their future and by allowing them to realize innovative internships in professional schools.

- International mobility experience to develop social, professional and inter-cultural skills, developed by ADICE of GAPS, through internships or volunteering abroad. International mobility relies on the following principles:
  1. It must be co-constructed between a project manager and a youngster.
  2. It should be adapted to the profile of each participant, which means, for instance, that an internship is constructed according to the relevant and necessary competencies.
  3. It should be considered as a lever toward employment. It must be a step in a pathway with measurable objectives.

- Volunteering at the local level and media techniques to engage young people and develop social and professional skills that enhance their CVs (developed by CSV through VillaCrossMedia). It is the engagement of youngsters in structures of general interest that bring one closer to employment, especially when this engagement is linked to training such as media techniques. The aim is to make volunteering attractive and valuable for youngsters at a distance from the labour market.

Nevertheless, these approaches can only be successful if the effort is shared between youngsters and companies. Recognition of differences and valorisation of alternative pathways are keys to reducing youth unemployment. For this to work, companies must adopt a policy of diversity management.
1.2 - The importance of empowering

In this context of high youth unemployment, the cluster partners have decided to focus their efforts on empowering young people, especially those with fewer opportunities or at distance from the labour market. With this in mind, the cluster has been working both on processes and outputs. A first academic definition of the concept is necessary.

The term of “empowerment” has arrived only a decade ago in Europe, since a decade and has since met an important success in the sector of social work and city policies, looking for fresh ideas.

The concept, however, is often criticized for lacking clarity:

“The lack of precise definition has made it amenable to diffuse applications, which have then exacerbated the lack of precision in its definition” (1).

Empowerment is a multi-construct concept, about both processes and outputs, for individuals and for communities, further limiting definition clarity. The debate on the definition of the concept comes historically from the convergence of several different disciplines, including psychology, health education, sociology and social work.

As the term suggests, the process of empowerment is fundamentally about gaining power. Talking about empowerment first underlines the fact that some are “dis-empowered”, and thus that the process of empowerment takes place in a context where power is unequally distributed and where structures exist to perpetuate the advantages of some over others.

Empowerment has been defined by McWhirter’s (2) as:

“the process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others, and (d) support the empowerment of others in their community” (2).

Empowerment can be seen as an iterative process, with two by-products: the establishment of goals and the

(1) Catteneo and Chapman (2) McWhirter, 1991

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concrete impact of the individual’s efforts toward achieving those ends. It thus includes the ability to mobilize resources, the awareness of power dynamics, the perceptions of control and the participation in community groups. The main interest of the notion is that it suggests a mechanism for righting power imbalances in society and that it encompasses a plurality of inequality, not only social classes but also age, sex, background, ethnicity, territory, etc. This explains the current popularity of this term.

Different meanings

There are three different concepts of empowerment:
• Power over: dominance
• Power to: freedom to act
• Power from: the ability to resist the demands of others.

Yet, the process of empowerment does not necessarily involve “attempts to control other people or to wrest resources away from another group (power over)”. Instead, the aim of the empowerment process should be to strengthen connections with others, perhaps by having a voice in group decisions or raising a grievance (“power to”).

In the “power from” category, the aim of the empowerment process might also be “greater separation from a group or less vulnerability to their influence.”

The empowerment process

It involves 6 dynamics that have to be undergone by the young person, with support from structures such as the cluster partners.

1. Setting power-oriented goals
   "The empowerment process is driven by a subset of the goals a person might pursue” (3). Such a goal can be described as an aim to increase one’s influence in social relations at any level of human interaction. Such a goal would forward one’s own interests or the interests of a group and could move one toward greater connection or autonomy. Identification of those goals can be immediately obvious or can to the contrary involve one in a lengthy and complex process: it might involve the identification of smaller goals or objectives that serve an overarching goal.

The cluster partners have thus underlined the need to identify - through individual meeting with the target group - their objectives, both social/personal and professional. The idea is to promote a step-by-step methodology with participants often involved in a complex process to identify goals and move toward empowerment. This is done through the TDI – Talent Development Instrument.

2. Self-efficiency
   Empowerment includes “personal power” or "experiencing oneself as a powerful person". It involves and promotes the recognition of the power and capabilities that individuals already possess. This also means that the opportunities, obstacles, and resources in one’s environment have obvious impact on one’s beliefs about what one can accomplish. One of the goals of empowerment is to increase the feeling of self-value, self-efficacy and control.
   The cluster partners consider that each young person has resources and competences that need to be valorised and thus assessed from the start of the process. Youngsters need to know who they are to know who they want to be. Competencies are identified and assessed, which helps build reachable and realistic goals. This is the value of the methodology set up by the cluster, through the TDI and pedagogical accompaniment.

3. Knowledge
   If identifying a goal is the first step, identifying the course of action to undertake should be the second one. Knowledge can be defined here as an understanding of the social context, including the power dynamics at play, the possible routes to goal attainment, the resources needed, and ways to obtain them. Empowerment is thus inseparable from a process of critical consciousness in which the disempowered gain power through recognizing themselves as oppressed and taking action. The aim is therefore to increase participants’ critical consciousness.
   The model set up by the cluster partners helps to identify resources and tools available to help become self-aware. It proposes training to valorise oneself and also real opportunities to take action through mobility, volunteering and internships.

(1) Catteneo and Chapman
4. Competence

The identification of skills that are lacking combined with the learning of new skills are key elements of the empowerment process. Learning skills to accomplish a task will increase self-efficacy and promote action. Experience with taking action will refine skills, further influencing self-efficacy and action. The goals are two fold: 1. to assess a person’s perception of their own competence; 2. to yield information about strengths, weaknesses and environmental obstacles and opportunities.

The TDI promotes the analyses of obstacles and opportunities for young participants so that they can undertake the right course of action. The aim for them is to be able to acquire new skills on three levels: social, professional and intercultural skills. These competencies are necessary to find a job of course, but also to develop critical awareness, open-mindedness and the feeling of self-value.

5. Action

Action is necessary to achieve goals. It is the logical follow-up of the empowerment model, which means that action should be driven by particular goals and beliefs about one’s ability to reach those goals, informed by relevant knowledge, and carried out using relevant skills. What needs to be underlined here is that action that leads to empowerment cannot be imposed but instead must be generated by a person’s perception of his or her situation. Action is hence linked to people’s knowledge about the power dynamics that operate in their lives and the ways they can or cannot change them. For cluster partners, if action is not imposed, it has two consequences:

1. Young people have to be informed of the opportunities they have, whatever their social, economic or educational background
2. Young people have to engage themselves. They have to play an essential role in their pathway. They can be accompanied but not pushed: motivation is a pre-requisite.

The action undertaken - with our model - will be:
- International mobility experience to develop social, professional and intercultural skills through internships or volunteering abroad.
- Professional training through internships
- Volunteering at local level.

6. Impact

Empowerment also means evaluating what happens following the individual’s actions. If we acknowledge that not all people have an equal chance of gaining power, the impact will also depend on environmental factors. The perception of the impact by the participants is also determined by many factors, such as the extent to which they believe they are “masters of their fate”, their experiences with discrimination and structural obstacles to their goal. The level of perceived success or failure have a strong influence on one’s efficacy beliefs.

“It is in reflecting on impact that obstacles to success such as discrimination, lack of resources, and institutionalized racism will become glaringly clear, revealing related power dynamics (knowledge) and leading to the refinement of goals.” (1)

For the cluster, this has two consequences. First, it means that all actions undertaken to get empowered require assessment and evaluation to valorise the competencies acquired and the success or failure of the action. Secondly, it means recognizing that some obstacles are structural and are independent from the action engaged by the participant. This is the reason the cluster partners included diversity management in their model. Efforts for the empowerment of youth have to be made from both sides, meaning from youngsters and from potential employers. The aim is to remove the obstacles and psychological barriers that prevent the social promotion of the target group. Diversity management is a tool to lead to a change in power dynamics and structures.

Sources:
Talpin, J., “Youth Empowerment : Concept, significations et action », Presentation during the YES ! Cluster event on the 13th May 2014 in Roubaix.
The term originates from social movement.

It appeared in the beginning of the 70’s, in American social movements to underline the necessity for minorities to have access to power over their fate, through collective actions and through participating to elections. We talk about “Black Empowerment”. The word is also appropriated by the feminist movements in the United-States, in India and in South Asia. The idea is that women live in patriarchal societies and that they should create the conditions for their emancipation. The term is also appropriated by the field of social work: empowerment calls then for attention to community well-being: empowerment involves respectful, caring and reflective participation in community group in order to gain equal access to and control over resources. It invokes the idea of increasing the power of marginalized population in their work toward social justice.

The term is then espoused as a flagship value by international organisations such as the World Bank and the UN; it appears in Ottawa Charter and the Jakarta declaration of the World Health Organisation from the 1990s to qualify some development programmes, especially regarding the role of women. The use of the term by the World Bank constitutes a watershed from the “Washington consensus”, former doctrine of the World Bank which organized structural adjustments plans from above. The objective is now to associate local populations to development policies, by combining the ideas of economic efficiency, individual emancipation and social progress.

Finally, the term of empowerment is used by national institutions, especially in the US and in the UK; these are public policies of empowerment: in the US appeared “empowerment zones” which are nothing else than free zones to allow for the economic development of deprived neighbourhoods. The idea is to encourage local communities to take control over their lives. Promoted as a tool for inclusion, “empowerment” is also appropriated by the “third way” of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton by accompanying a withdrawal of the Welfare State so that people can gain mastery over their affairs.
My first experience of working with young people was a rural Youth Club with members who were all white. Although I was only nineteen, I had worked since I was sixteen and volunteered from the age of fourteen with people deemed vulnerable. I believed myself to be confident and a good communicator. I was excited that I had finally found a job in youth work in the evenings and in the day continued to work for the statutory sector with adults with learning difficulties (LD).

As a youth worker, I walked into that community centre a confident young woman - but throughout the whole session the only person I engaged with was a co-worker to say whether I had milk in my coffee or not. I froze. I was terrified. For a short period of time, the first time, I felt totally disempowered and deskillled. I was vulnerable and felt totally helpless and useless. It took months before I felt able to engage in an effective way.

Now I can look back and think about the barriers I faced in that environment and my feelings. These were:
- Powerless
- I was young
- Out of my depth
- Isolated
- Unable to ask for help
- Threatened

I was vulnerable because I was a:
- Woman
- Minority
- From a different geographical area
- Had different needs

As professionals we should always try to reflect on our practice. I often reflect on this experience and imagine how a young person from a different ethnic group would feel accessing that provision.

Reflective practice is a tool that indicates good effective practice, measuring our practice by reflecting, analysing, evaluation and planning. If we understand the importance of reflective practice we are one step closer to supporting young people to do the same. Furthermore we can then start to identify reasons young people may not be accessing our provisions.
2.1 - Youngsters, develop your talent

iLAEBOR is an acronym for ‘Investing in Labor and Education in Border Regions’. The project originates from previous successful partnerships in cross-border projects within different EU programs. Through the European partnerships a need was identified to address the existing problems with labour market guidance and the social inclusion of (young) individuals with multiple problems, into a new transnational project. The identified problems, target groups and activities are priorities within the Interreg IVa 2 Seas programme. The partners who collaborated in the iLAEBOR project delivered the development of the online toolbox, The Talent Development Instrument (TDI).

What is the TDI?

This toolbox is designed to motivate and support ambitious youngsters in discovering their talents. It helps them through a few simple steps -under the guidance of a mentor- to appoint their hard, but mainly soft skills and to look for an interesting and positive future in the field of study or work. This instrument is a starting point within the YES! Empowerment model, because it detects what the youngster is capable of, and even more important, what his or her needs are. As stated before “empowerment is about attaining the power to make choices”, but to make a choice, you need a fundament to base this choice on. The TDI functions as such a base. This is an essential contribution to the empowerment of youth within the starting phase of the YES! Empowerment Model. In addition to youths other direct beneficiaries of the TDI are, for example, HR companies interested in diversity management, talent development, job coachers (in the public/private sector), educational structures, employment agencies, welfare centres, sheltered workshops and detention/penitentiary institutions. Through three different components, there can ultimately be made a so-called action plan for the youngster to discover career and education opportunities. The three components vary from information about the participant, to personal data and skills, to an individual development plan with information about interests and limitations and finally the individual action plan is made and this is monitored along their pathway...
Content TDI

The first part of the instrument is the Personal Details. This should be completed by the participant, if necessary in collaboration with an assessor. Here, all personal data can be entered such as name, address, training, work and other experience, skills, language abilities and other competencies. The second part of the instrument is the Individual Development Plan. In this part, it is intended that the assessor, recommended in collaboration with the participant, fills out the information. In this section, the interests of the participants are noted, for example, how and in which area the person wants to grow and why the participant would like to develop certain skills. Also information such as personality, motivation, environmental factors, other competencies, potentials, limitations and the labour market relevance are discussed.

Last but not least, the third and last part of the instrument, the Individual Action Plan, is derived from the information of the first two sections of the Talent Development Instrument. The assessor in collaboration with the participant will review this action plan. This plan reflects on what actions the participant must undertake in areas such as his or her career, additional work experience and education. This also takes into account changes in personality, environmental factors, skills that are needed, limitations that must be noted and even the future labour market perspective. But above all, the following question should be answered: What support is needed and in what time frame, for the participant to achieve his or her goal?

This individual development never stands alone, since it is part of an ongoing process. This means that the various steps are connected, like a SWOT analysis of the participant themselves, as a continuous process.

It includes: a self-analysis (what are ones strengths and weaknesses) and an analysis of opportunities and threats. It is essential to ask: How can one best develop ones talents and how can one EMPOWER oneself?

Once agreements between the participant and assessor are made and the Individual Action Plan is completed, the participant starts with their development process and it includes feedback moments as an on-going process to show whether or not progress has been made. This progress will be added to the instrument and continues the process of the Individual Action Plan, until the intended targets of the participant are achieved.
2.2 - TDI testimonials

“It was an eye opener that was needed, to see what I really wanted, namely directing my own life again and take control”, Brecht

“Because of my physical shortcomings, I couldn’t finish school [...] However, I’ve can finally start my training for beautician [...] My dream? To open my own beauty salon” - Hanne, 21 years old

BRECHT, 22, “TAKING CONTROL!”

Brecht has struggled to keep a goal in life in mind and to search for his own talents. For various reasons, he ultimately stopped his technical vocational educational training and he eventually came in contact via the iLaebor project to the TDI. Together with an assessor, Brecht started the TDI, but that was difficult in the beginning. “It was a real booster [...] but that’s sometimes also confrontational”, says Brecht. But eventually he learned more about himself, his talents, limitations but especially his opportunities! He learned that he really needed to take back control of his own life. Brecht currently immersed himself in which practical training suits him and he keeps working on the action plan of his TDI!

HANNE, 21, “MY OWN BEAUTY SALON”

Hanne heard in her third year of secondary school, that she suffered a severe hernia and this meant that she unfortunately could not follow her peers in their general educational pathway, because of surgery and therapy. She was suddenly confronted with a lot of change in her life and struggled with her shortcomings. She couldn’t even get her secondary educational degree, but in cooperation with the iLaEBOR team she started the TDI and she found out she had a dream: her own beauty salon! Some steps still need to be taken to fulfil this dream, like gain experience in internships, improve communication skills and theoretical help with her training. In cooperation with her assessor she is working on this action plan. After passing the entrance exam, Hanne will be a student on the Wellness College in Belgium to get her degree in one year.
Chapter 3
Internships: preparing for the labour market

3.1 - What is Inceptio?

Scalda, a vocational school in the southern province of the Netherlands, Zeeland, provides education for students between 16 and 23 years. Many students have difficulties getting a job in the labour market. For the graduates who are less highly trained it is even more a challenge to find a job. The prospects for jobs are very limited because employees who were made redundant are also searching for new jobs and people with higher education are forced to apply for jobs below their capacities. As labour market issues increase apprenticeships are also very difficult to obtain. Without an apprenticeship, students at Scalda cannot graduate. The business department of Scalda was involved in several activities during the ILAEBOR project: they prepared students for the labour market at several stages during their education.

Inceptio: a brief overview

Students prepared for their job search by building a portfolio and thanks to innovative education. In project teams, they learn to produce a real product or a service. In this way they learn to apply specific skills such as planning and organizing, working together, dealing with a supplier and delivering a product or a service. The students with labour market issues were trained for a regular apprenticeship. Students with specific labour market issues could do a specific apprenticeship at Inceptio itself. Scalda also started up several meetings on specific issues that are becoming more common such as ADHD, Autism, dyslexia and dyscalculia. The activity with the most impact was the set-up of Inceptio, an external learning company at Vlissingen which is related to Scalda. Approximately 55 students worked in the meantime at Inceptio and were able to accomplish internship in their education. Trainees with physical, social or mental issues are getting prepared at Inceptio for labour market. They accomplish assignments for other companies in the administrative field. Telephone polls, research assignments producing newsletters, finding sponsors are some of the task assignments for the trainees at Inceptio.

"Thanks for applying for an apprenticeship, but unfortunately we don’t have the possibility to
offer you a place.” In the best scenario, Laurence David, an eighteen year old student, got this reply each time she applied. Lots of her attempts weren’t even answered by the companies she approached. Laurence got very demotivated by this situation. She applied for 100 apprenticeships. She is content at the moment that Inceptio provides her with tasks, which enables her to get in contact with companies. Another student, Joan Jansen van Galen, almost dropped out of school. She almost stopped her secretary program because of her 2 year old son. She often had to visit the hospital with her sick son and got fired. “They showed no understanding,” she says. Her graduation was threatened and she immediately had to look for another job. She applied for another job 30 times but didn’t get hired. Now at Inceptio she can combine the care for her son and working towards her graduation.

The environment of Inceptio is an alternative for youngsters who find difficulties when they apply for a regular apprenticeship at companies. Two coaches help shape the trainees on specific labour market skills with reference to the trainees’ specific deficiencies. They learn what they need to function in a job and to be assertive in communicating about their issues.

The coaches at Inceptio

Inceptio helps the labour market by improving labour market skills of employees in an early stage. In the training phase before these students even enter labour market, Inceptio improves specific skills which students otherwise would miss such as communicative and social skills. The coaches of Inceptio focus on talents and not on the deficiencies of their trainees. They make students more self-aware and teach them how they can deal with challenging issues. The trainees learn about protecting personal boundaries and presenting themselves positively. In this early stage, students are confronted with the gap they have towards the labour market. A lot of programmes focus on drop outs or unemployed who have not succeeded. Having awareness of the labour market in combination with personal talents and deficiencies in as an early stage as possible is the key to being successful. Inceptio offers students a chance to get a degree, to see talents and possibilities which lead to self-confidence. With this self-confidence, they enter the labour market!

Tips and Tricks for training students with labour market issues:

• Arise self-awareness, self esteem
• Focus on talents and possibilities, not on deficiencies or difficulties
• Provide tools which enables a positive dialogue at a company/organization
  • Give tools to set necessary boundaries
  • Be honest and direct about negative issues
• Combine coaching and specific skills training
• Both product/service quality and processes are important
• The best result is that each teacher focuses on the common goal by coaching
• Provide programs that are complementary in several stages during the educational program
Nowadays, in our continuously changing world, educators have a duty to innovate. The challenge can be summed up around two main axes:

### The first revolves around the concept of "project"
- **How to help young people to project themselves?**
- **We need to develop the skills of project management of young people, starting with their own lives.**

Regularly, these remarks highlight the importance of trust, "self-confidence", "confident in the other", "confidence in the future" ...

The second axis is based more specifically on the importance of solving problems and conflicts:
- **How to overcome failures and be in a state of mind to find solutions?**
- **When a problem arises, how to deal with it?**

Whether these are the words of professionals accompanying young people or the speeches of young people themselves, it is interesting to put the content of these exchanges in a historical perspective.

**Would the terms used have been the same fifty years ago? Would the needs expressed have been the same too?**

To these questions, we can strongly assume that the problems arose in different words and phrasing. Indeed, the social and economic context was strongly different: full employment existed, everyone's future seemed much less uncertain, not least by the fact that people had stable careers. The prospect of staying in an organization a whole working life was not marginal; it was the norm. Tasks were more accurate and less varied. Activity was less random.

If today, we speak so much of "project", it is because it is important to be autonomous in their job search and the evolution of a career which is less and less secure. If today's "management problem / conflict" takes so much space in speeches, it is because you should be able to react more quickly to situations which are more and more complex.

To what extent do we learn to live in an environment increasingly uncertain whatever we talk about economics, social life or politics? To this question, the partners of the cluster believe that the model set up is a first step. By cons, we can agree on the fact that this situation puts educators in front of a permanent duty of questioning themselves and their work: how do I prepare a young person to the world in which he lives? And if the world continues to change rapidly, it is important that practices evolve rapidly and regularly. This is our duty of innovation.

**Clément Dupuis, Expert in mobility and pedagogical tools.**
4.1 - How does mobility empower young people?

Mobility is included in the Europe 2020 strategy, aimed at stimulating intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. This inclusion is based on the finding that international mobility is an experience that develops values, personal resources, technical and relational know-how. These are essential skills for social and professional integration; and in-turn, for social cohesion and employment within the European Union. For the participant, international mobility is an opportunity for learning and growing in four main areas of one’s development.

International mobility, a source of empowerment for youngsters

Gaining perspective on one’s own culture
Mobility invites us to expand our view of things by enabling us to discover other cultures and ways of living, to meet new people and to become familiar with different economic and social contexts. This contributes to developing greater trust in people and in the unfamiliar.

This is an essential building block in social cohesion and European construction.

Regarding citizenship, an experience of international mobility represents the best opportunity to strengthen civic engagement by taking people out of their community. It is the best way to realize how different humanity is but also how similar it is.

Feeling more at ease in relations with others
During their mobility, young people find themselves in situations that offer more opportunities to hear new opinions and to consider different viewpoints. They learn to listen to them, debate them, and express their own opinion. Studies show that young men and women who participate in mobility projects feel changed “for the better” when they return home.

Young people in international mobility acquire or reinforce their self-confidence and new resources for more open relationships that will be useful when they return to their social and professional lives.

Six months after their return 40% of young people find that they are better at expressing their opinions, speaking in front of a group and adapting their behaviour to different situations and groups.
Expanding one’s vision of what is possible

When young, it is important to question everything and to make choices. International mobility is an opportunity for cultural and social encounters and discovery of other ways of life that may provide new responses to one’s areas of interest, motivations and values. It is a way of clarifying other possibilities that we had not considered and of opening up our personal or professional “project” to new choices.

With mobility, it is also possible to re-shuffle your cards in order to get rid of the “bad ones”. In fact, in a different environment, people look at you in new and different ways. Taken out of your context, you can avoid characterizations that seem to close doors and keep you from getting ahead. You once again feel that things can change, the range of possibilities opens up, and you have greater confidence in yourself and in the future.

Six months after they return home, 80% of people feel that they are better able to carry out a project, and they are more self-confident.

Consolidating your professional project

Mobility is a concrete experience or immersion that lets you test out an idea or professional project and, at the same time, try your hand at it, in order to confirm your choices or discover other opportunities or new motivations.

Six months after they return home, 82% of participants find that their idea of their professional project is clearer and more concrete after their experience, compared with 40% before their departure.

Mobility also makes it possible to develop or reinforce personal resources that constitute general or multidisciplinary skills that are essential for any professional project and in any employment situation. These are self-sufficiency, initiative, responsibility, organisational skills and open-mindedness.

Mobility is therefore an opportunity for learning and evolving that leaves one with greater values, resources and skills useful for steering your personal and professional project.

In that respect, mobility is an additional advantage for accessing employment: Self-sufficiency, initiative, responsibility, organisational skills, open-mindedness, etc.… are very important general and multidisciplinary skills in the eyes of employers.

Mobility is also an experience for which values such as commitment, solidarity, trust and cooperation are essential. These values are becoming increasingly important in rapidly developing service economies.

Finally, mobility itself is an advantage on a CV as it demonstrates the person’s ability to commit to a project far from his family and social environment, to adapt to a different culture, to become part of an organisation and a context which codes are poorly understood, and to express themselves and be understood in another language.

Six months after they return home from mobility, only 34% are still job seekers; 78% were job seekers before they left on their mobility project.

These statistics are taken from the brochure “European and International Mobility” published by ADICE-Europe Direct Roubaix and available at http://www.adice.asso.fr/?p=2950. The figures are taken from ADICE’s 6-month follow-up for 2013 (53 respondents).
4.2 - Conditions for a good mobility project

Conditions for a good mobility project

Good conditions for a successful mobility project have been identified by ADICE and have led the organisation to model a follow-up methodology. The main philosophy behind this methodology is to bring each participant an accompaniment adapted to his/her needs and project, so that their mobility project can turn into a real lever towards social inclusion and employability.

The follow-up methodology developed by ADICE is divided into 5 modules whose objectives are to:

• Module 1: To define a mobility project based on the profile and on the personal and professional pathway of the participant; to organize support and “make contract” (content and steps of the educational process, roles and mutual engagements).
• Module 2: To bring all the competencies the participant will need to succeed in his or her project, especially to deal with intercultural contexts; to give advice and methods on how to manage a mobility project; to prepare the return from mobility.
• Module 3: To settle the last details before departure; to reinforce the training if necessary.
• Module 4: To ensure a continuing follow-up of the mobility period and to transfer tools for self-evaluation.
• Module 5: To identify competencies acquired; to capitalize them to reinforce the professional project of the participant.

Marion spent two months in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the framework of a European Voluntary Service.

“...It was a real conception and design... we had to create everything from A to Z! Personally, this experience encourages me to continue in the arts and entertainments sector. I was also able to juggle fire, a new experience for me! Professionally, this volunteering experience allowed me to take a break from my work to refocus. I have developed new skills such as learning how to work in an international team. I have also been able to strengthen my project management skills since starting from a simple project we had to conceive a whole show. In short, my life has changed thanks to the European Voluntary Service! For me, being on stage is a joy, it is a sharing with the team and the public, and this project supported this vision. We give something to the public but at the same time we get back a lot from them. All this together let us achieve a concrete result: a show ready to go for a world tour!”
4.3 - Conditions for empowerment

ADICE’s experience in mobility projects, reinforced by the 2Seas GAPS project, has resulted in the following conclusions on the conditions needed for the empowerment of young people through their participation in mobility projects.

1. An individual project with objectives
Empowerment through mobility implies that mobility is enshrined in a personal and professional pathway for each participant: there should be clearly defined objectives to reach that have to be evaluated once the participant has returned. Mobility must also be constructed according to the needs and profiles of the individual, so that it brings results. Interviews are set up between the participant and the project manager to identify the pathway, the competencies and objectives of the participant. A tool, such as the Talent Development Instrument is a good example of how this first step could be delivered. The support and accompaniment is necessary but a key is that the participant has to remain active in the construction of their mobility project: not only guidance but also autonomy are necessary for the project to succeed.

2. A good follow-up and evaluation
Participants in mobility projects need mentors and supervisors in the sending, coordinating and hosting organisation. Monthly follow-up is necessary to check if the objectives are being met and to assess the competencies being acquired. Once returned, an evaluation takes place to see how objectives have been reached and to define the competencies acquired. This step is necessary to ensure that the participant will be able to valorise their experience: they need guidance to identify their new social, professional and intercultural skills.

3. Anticipating difficulties
Participants need to receive training prior to their departure to be prepared for the worst-case scenario and to be ready to act autonomously in case there is a problem during their stay abroad. Some participants, with fewer opportunities or at distance from the labour market, require more assistance and support from project managers. A fine balance has to be found between guidance and the development of autonomy.

Eglantine went to Brighton for 5 months with the GAPS project
My mission as a computer graphics designer was to create or update the page layout and design of the firm’s marketing documents. I worked for a small start-up firm of around 10 people.
As a young graduate unable to find work easily in France due to lack of experience, despite having done numerous internships, and being considered “too young” in the eyes of employers, I came across ADICE in Roubaix who proposed to build with me an interesting and enriching international mobility project. I chose to undertake an adventure to take a sort of 5 month Gap year between completing my studies and entering the world of work. At the same time, I would be able to immerse myself completely in a foreign country and language, during the internship and during my time with host family.
I am really proud to have taken the risk! I took the step of going abroad, spreading my wings and proving (to my parents ;) that I was capable of being an independent and responsible adult. Buying train tickets for London at the ticket office in England and travelling there on my own without getting lost, just like an adult! To top it all off, I’m also very proud of having given directions to English people out on the street.

“In all, previously I only looked for work in my home region, but now I am ready to travel around France or go even further! Travelling is part of being young!”
4.4 - Testimonials on international mobility

Johannes spent 6 months in Tanzania with a humanitarian volunteering project

“It was a 6 month learning curve”

During my mission I had to evaluate the situation of each village, write a report and subsidy proposals. I also helped to adapt the association’s activities so that it is able to receive more donations. For this, I worked on the website and on promoting the association on social networks.

Why did you want to go abroad?
I wanted to gain more work experience in East Africa after having already lived for 3 months in Nairobi in Kenya. I also wanted to work in resolving conflicts, even though it was clear that I had more experience in agriculture, water and creating revenue.

What are you most proud of?
It was an enriching experience and beneficial for me as well as for the association where I worked. It was also really rewarding. I learnt how to do an evaluation of a village community. Although I already had theoretical knowledge, putting it into practice gave me new perspectives.

List 3 things that you learnt professionally and personally.
Firstly, I learnt how to evaluate the needs of the local community. It was fascinating to learn the ways to get the community involved so that they can adapt in order to take on the new activities. I also learnt how to write up an appeal for a grant. This was nothing like I had done before, and it was an interesting learning curve. Finally, I learnt how to interact with the local community; it wasn't easy to combine my European outlook with an African one. This took lots of socializing with the locals in order to find out where I fit in the local community.

An anecdote? It was only during the last month, that I realized that a basis work was needed. This means that just using the computer was not such an easy thing. It was all about trust, since the association employees would have never told me before that they needed some help. That is why it is so important to stay on a long period, to get to know each other.

Lucile spent 9 months in Germany through a volunteering experience

“Nine months of meeting new people, different experiences and discoveries, learning, spending time with others, laughing... in all, 9 months of living life to the fullest”

I was given the task of helping the carers in a retirement home in Germany.

Why did you want to go abroad?
I’ve wanted to be a carer for a long time but I haven’t had the opportunity to gain the experience necessary to enter a good training program.

How has this experience changed your life?
After my diploma, I hope to live abroad. This experience helped me to make this choice and will hopefully help me to integrate more easily and be more open minded.

List 3 things that you learnt professionally and personally.
This experience helped me to know for sure what I wanted to do professionally and I was able to join a training program that interested me once I had finished my SVE, I met some great people at work as well as outside of work and this allowed me to learn and improve new languages.

Are there things that struck you the most during your time abroad?
There were so many things that struck me that I wouldn’t have time to talk about them all. The best thing was that you are able to get to know people when doing interesting things together. For example, I remember one time when we went to see an improv show in German. I realised that I did not understand any of the jokes. In the end, I understood most of the show and I even surprised myself by laughing.
5.1 - What is volunteering?

Volunteers make a massive difference to people and communities all over the UK; from providing advice and friendship to troubled families, helping children to read at school or empowering people with disabilities to live independently.

Volunteering: a brief overview

Volunteering enables people to give something back and provides a new sense of purpose, learn valuable new skills, and make new friends. Volunteers will get as much out of the experience as the people and communities they help.

The cluster partner CSV works with companies nationwide to set up volunteering projects that give the benefit of voluntary action for employers, employees and the community as a whole. CSV Employee Volunteering works closely with a wide range of organisations, large and small, including international financial groups, media organisations and well-known high street retail brands. CSV also delivers volunteering opportunities to government offices such as HM Treasury.

Studies have shown that volunteering boosts morale, improves staff retention and helps staff to develop as individuals, bringing their newfound skills, confidence and enthusiasm back into the workplace.

Volunteering is about not only helping vulnerable or marginalized people but also empowering them to become active in the community, build skills and confidence and increase their options whilst making a difference. In the framework of this cluster, CSV has valorised the outputs of the 2Seas projects called Villa Cross Media (VxM), one of CSV Ipswich's flagship projects.

VxM promotes and facilitates experience-based media education, literacy, participation, production and dissemination initiatives by connecting cross-border media centres. The target group is 16 to 25 year old and it has particular focus on social inclusion, cultural identity and local empowerment. CSV has worked closely with its Belgian partners in Mechelen and Bruges to hone its engagement tools and share best practice, ensuring that the best approaches from the UK and Belgium benefit young people all across Europe. Volunteering was used in complementarity with training. Training is
important for peer to peer support. If volunteers do bring in unique skills and do share these without remuneration, many are unemployed because they lack development in other areas. CSV helps to develop these weak skills, either by peer to peer support or training because everyone should have the opportunity to progress.

Through this cluster, CSV has promoted volunteering experience as a tool for engagement and employability. CSV’s experience helped to determine the positive aspects of volunteering, which makes it a tool for employment and which make it relevant to the model developed by the YES! cluster.

1st: step-by-step method: guidance and orientation
CSV relies on a wheel of engagement, to identify the needs of the target group and propose a clear action plan to the young people, according to their needs and objectives. The aim is to work on SMART goals: S – Specific M – Measurable A – Achievable R – Realistic T – Time Bound

2nd: attractive volunteering
Volunteering is conceived as an experience that has to be both attractive and qualifying.

1. Volunteering is a social experience
It increases social and relationship skills. Volunteering is a two-way street, not only impacting the community but also benefiting the volunteer by expanding their network and boosting their social skills.

2. Volunteering increases self-confidence
It boosts self-confidence and self-esteem by providing a sense of accomplishment and a sense of pride. CSV acts by encouraging young people at a distance from the labour market to develop their media skills by setting up media centres. The tools developed through the VillaCrossMedia project include video production training, digital story-telling project and a series of final festivals celebrating young people’s achievements. This way, volunteering has also a primary role in reducing social isolation.

3. Volunteering increases the employability of young people
Volunteering provides career experience by developing important skills such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, project planning, task management and organisation. With CSV, volunteers learn the opportunities linked to new media; youth media production is encouraged through digital stories, magazines and radio productions, which showcase the dreams, hopes and aspirations of European young people. Volunteering provides extensive training, improving public speaking, communication and marketing skills.

3rd: reflecting on our practices: the importance of evaluation
Volunteering needs to include a reflective practice defined as the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. Using reflective practice techniques can be a powerful tool in supporting a professional journey in striving to continually learn and measure the effectiveness of the tool. As for the mobility tool described earlier, evaluation is a key to guarantee a successful experience.
5.2 - Testimonials on volunteering and media techniques

These testimonies describe the pathways of two volunteers, MM and OS, with CSV. They both volunteered in CSV and learned media techniques.

1. Radio
MM joined VxM’s IO Radio team after a recommendation from our strong links with the job centre. She had been unemployed since leaving university and was looking to get a break in the world of media and film making. MM started to cohost a weekly arts show and support her peers using her university experience. It was through the arts show that she started to create contacts in the local area. After producing a selection of small films for IO Radio, MM produced a time lapse film of the new studio being painted by a local artist Joel Millerchip. The result of the film was superb and MM was asked to film a further project for Joel Millerchip. MM headed to London and filmed the Illustrators Fayre which involved a collection of the UK’s best illustrators. This was MM’s first paid work as a film maker. This has now lead on to MM launching her own small film company producing short production films for companies in the UK. She has already picked up additional work for illustrators and has also picked up her first music video work, both for a local artist Tommee Malone and UK band Stahlsarg, who recently played at the Bloodstock festival. MM has also found full time employment based on her video experience within the VxM project.

2. Music Show
OS joined the station in order to play out new music and give new artists a break on local radio. OS had the idea of having guests on her show once a month and the rest of the time having it simply as a music show. When she first arrived she said she was worried about going on air and talking to guests due to her confidence levels. With coaching and training, OS gained confidence incredibly quickly and her interviews became very professional and a must listen for the radio schedule. This helped her in the decision to increase the amount of interviews she does and, mid-October 2013, she announced that she had fully booked up her shows with interviews until late January 2014. She has also put herself forward for IO radio’s festival coverage in 2014 and is now speaking to the Reading festival about covering it for the station. This will continue to grow her confidence as she learns to navigate her way around the media world at a large event and learn to deal with higher profile acts and artists.

When speaking about her progress, OS said that her friends and family could not believe that it was her on the radio. Her confidence has been transformed since she arrived for her first days training and she is now considering a change in direction in order to become a teacher as she now feels that she would exceed in that sort of environment due to her experience at IO Radio.
6.1 - What is diversity management?

Diversity management is part of a human resources management strategy, in which ambitions and competences are the driving force in the development of employees, with constant focus on equal rights and opportunities.

Diversity management: a brief overview

An effective diversity management program will promote recognition and respect for the individual differences found among a group of employees.

The idea of this management style is to encourage employees to be comfortable with diversity in the workplace and develop an appreciation for differences in race, gender, background, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability or any other factor that may not be shared by everyone working in the same area of the company.

There are several reasons that motivate more ‘open-mindedness’: one of them is that employment rates in the whole 2 Seas area are too low and need to increase in order to attain a healthy economy. Governmental measures try to encourage this open-mindedness and a more equal labour participation through initiatives such as awareness trainings, counselling, wage subsidies, etc.

Another motivation for a more open minded recruitment policy is the win-win situation for both employers and employees. Employees receiving special and personalized attention to their needs, appreciate the chance and are therefore more motivated and willing to give the best of themselves. This is a return on investment employers certainly benefit from.

Diversity management underlines that recruitment goes beyond the clichés of the typical employee profile of the young, highly educated, native male with no physical disability.

Diversity Management is important for the sustainability of an organisation.

A corporate culture stressing diversity as an asset has a positive impact on the overall success of a business. The use and further development of different skills, talents, views and experiences of human resources is necessary to be creative and innovative. In addition, it leads to an improved service towards clients and customers and in the long run adds up to the competitiveness of the company.
iLAEBOR SUPPORTING THE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT CONCEPT

1. Diversity course module

Through iLAEBOR, various facts and figures, measures as well as supporting instruments and tools were developed to raise labour market chances of a very diverse target group.

Diversity management was one of the themes addressed, and as one of the three main activity blocks this project chapter included actions within educational and corporal environments.

A diversity management course module was developed for educational institutions, mainly meant for higher educational institutions, but also consisting of different modules and chapters. Perfectly adaptable for any other educational purpose in formal, informal, vocational and secondary learning situations. During various interactive presentations in the partner countries, among others a ‘Spring School’ for students in Antwerp, the course module was presented and welcomed enthusiastically to trainers, educational officers, HR management and students. The 180-page course module can be ordered through diversity@empower.be.

2. Diversity audits

Corporate environments

Various companies in the UK, the Netherlands and Flanders took the chance to have their diversity policy audited. Together with the new initiative, M.Power NL, led by project partners Empower (BE) and Pro Work (NL), action plans were thereupon developed, focusing on various HR aspects such as recruitment, mentorship, effective HR capital, drop-out prevention through a diversity perspective, for example:

- How to coordinate your HR policy with the diverse mix of talents on the work floor?
- How to recruit and retain the right person for each job?
- How to improve the corporate culture based on diversity?
- How to introduce competence management?

Testimonial Nicole Oolman, M.Power NL (Pro Work)

“The success of the M.Power NL methodology lies in the fact that we focus on the company’s needs rather than societal needs. Companies are much more likely to believe in benefits and opportunities, rather than in quota and so-called positive discrimination. We point out possible advantages and returns, by showing them a possible pathway towards a structurally diverse HR policy in every aspect, being a win-win for both employer and employee. In addition, we offer support in adapting HR processes but we never take over; every step is a decision of the company itself, always in close correspondence with their specific corporate culture”.

“Thanks to diversity management, our staff now succeeds in cooperating in an effective way. Through this approach we reach the best production volumes ever!”

Ad Jansen, Diversity Manager Volvo Cars Ghent
3. Assistive technology and other tools

Assistive technology

Assistive technology refers to assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for people with disabilities. It also includes the process of selecting and using the devices. Assistive technology promotes greater independence by enabling people to perform tasks that they were formerly unable to accomplish, or had great difficulty accomplishing, by providing enhancements to, or changing methods of interacting with, the technology needed to accomplish such tasks. CAT-CH, an Antwerp (BE) based non profit organisation, supports people in the acquirement and further use of these kinds of devices, in order to help enlarge chances in education and in the labour market.

Pictogram dictionary

CAT-CH also developed a pictogram dictionary in the iLAEBOR project that can be used in the workplace and in work-based trainings for a wide target group: foreign newcomers, individuals with a mild intellectual disability, people with communication problems, people with autism spectrum or attention deficit disorder, etc. Benefits from the pictogram dictionary include clear work instructions supported by visuals, transparent agreements on placing working material or documents in the right place, explanation of processes and work flow in a straight-forward way.

Case study Assistive Technology Use - Tom S. 18-year old, Antwerp

"As a recently graduated student I am now on the look for a job. As I suffer from dysphasia, a disorder that causes trouble speaking or comprehending speech, I have difficulties finding words, understanding instructions or reading texts. Next to my speech therapist, I can get a lot of help through Assistive Technology: applications that read practically any text from any software program or speech software that read texts out loud for me, sometimes even making summaries, mean an enormous help. If my future employer can give me some flexibility and additional time when needed, I am sure I am able to perform just as well as my colleagues, if not better!"

“Diversity works, and not only because of the financial benefit. Ever since we started this diversity plan, we have a much better view on the whole of our HR policy.”

Rudi Coolkens, CEO All Seasons
6.2 - Point of view - Diversity management in companies: how to make the click?

1. Do companies think they need diversity management? How do they respond to the idea?
Koen: "In general there are two types of companies focusing on diversity management: on the one side the ones who are willing to raise their corporate social responsibility, believing in the importance of investing in soft skills of staff, in order to enhance a more creative and productive corporate culture. On the other side we also see companies that fail to fill their vacancies and who enlarge their scope to other alternatives. These employers are willing to invest in training and coaching, as long as they find engaged people who are eager to work. Coaching and guidance of these new recruits is sometimes crucial for an optimal integration".

2. How can companies be convinced of the idea?
Koen: "It is important to detect and to respond to the specific needs of the company and convince them of our tailor-made approach. And naturally, many companies will always need to see the added value and the return on investment before undertaking the first step".

3. Which are the most essential logical steps in diversity management?
Koen: "This is different for each company. In a nutshell, we identify companies sharing a corporate social responsibility; define their goals with them; introduce diversity management in the required HR-field (e.g. recruitment, job evaluation policy, retention and motivation strategies). We support both employer and employees in setting goals and finally guide the company throughout the whole process, including intervening in order to avoid misunderstandings and teething problems".

4. How do companies look back upon your guidance? Did it actually change their organisation?
Koen: "Most companies respond very enthusiastically, as they experience their HR policy in a totally different way. They appreciate our no-nonsense, hands-on approach which renders immediate tangible results. Vacancies are filled with good staff, sometimes a financial bonus can be the icing on the cake".
In order to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the YES! model, a SWOT analysis was made. This method provides information that is helpful in matching the model to existing methods for empowerment and job coaching. On the bases of the internal and external analyses that have been carried out by the partners, the targets for dissemination and further development of the model are defined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The model offers proper solutions to current unemployment rates among youngsters and allows for empowerment through setting goals, enhancing knowledge and competencies and offering opportunities to gain both social and professional skills.</td>
<td>Cultural differences mean that all opportunities might not equally fit young people in all countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step-by-step methodology is flexible for different target groups thus also for young people with fewer opportunities</td>
<td>Model is relatively unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The model stresses personalized guidance, individual accompaniment and competence assessment as the right methodology.</td>
<td>There are legislative or cultural obstacles and differences to set up the model in various countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model integrates a corollary and necessary approach to remove obstacles of youth empowerment: diversity management. It also takes into account the demands of the labour market.</td>
<td>Individual coaching can cause considerable costs when large numbers of participants make use of the model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengths

The model starts off from the capabilities, talents and interests of the unemployed. This positive way of addressing unemployment will enhance the interest of the unemployed individual to work with the model. The model can be a continuous process. Once you are engaged in the concept, you are able to keep working with it, therefore enhancing your competencies, skills and ultimately: your chances on the labour market.

You will not be judged on your weaknesses, but your strengths

The model is adaptable; organisations can adjust it to their own tools and instruments

Weaknesses

Technical adjustment of the tools are necessary to integrate, for instance, the different educational systems

Opportunities

Possibility to have it integrated in different organisations that can thus propose alternative pathways to employment.

Ability to have projects adapted to each youngster according to their profile

Opportunity to make use of the network of all partners to make the model known by stakeholders

Customization of approach to the needs of the individual. The model provides this opportunity.

Possibility to offer the concept to institutions that have no strict tools for activating the target group.

Creation of better connection between (young) employees and employers

Threats

The willingness of other organisations to adapt the model can be limited, because organisations are attached to their own methods and instruments

It is not evident that all three pathways to employment can be offered in every region

If the model is not used enough it loses strength and connection with the target group/labour market

It might be a challenge to disseminate it properly

Using out opportunities

Changes in society

Due social and political factors, society is becoming increasingly more demanding of the individual. Collectivism is in decay and making way for self-responsibility and participation. According to the Dutch government, society is moving away from the “welfare state” towards the “participation society”. In this community, individuals shape their own future, not only by adding value to their own lives, but also to society as a whole. For the unemployed, this means more than ever that they are expected to take action that leads to a job. Especially for people who are at “distance from the labour market”, the YES-model, which offers the opportunities for development of skills and competencies on the bases of a personal development plan, fits well in the socio-political development of this era. Stipulating this argument may lead to increasing willingness to make use of the YES model.

Helping out institutions

In the field of mediation on the labour market, many parties are active. The most important actors in this field pose their own methodologies and methods, which are often embedded in their business processes.

There is a large number of organisations and institutions, in contact with the unemployed, that do not have specific tools and instruments for activating the target group. It is a great opportunity to find and contact these organisations and point out the benefits of the YES model and its different pathways for empowerment.
Offering added value

Even when organisations use their own instruments for coaching and guiding, there may well be possibilities for integrating part of the YES model into these instruments. Discussing the added value of all pathways may open the doors to integration of elements of the YES model. The project partners realise that organisations might want to stick to instruments that they are familiar with; but they might complete these instruments with elements such as Volunteering or Mobility.

Eliminating the threats

1. Other tools and instruments

It has been stipulated before: organisations that are using their own tools may be reluctant to take over other instruments. This might threaten the use of the YES model, but on the other hand it offers possibilities to take over part of the model and integrate it in their own methods, as added value.

2. Applying the complete model

The YES model consists of three pathways and an assessment tool that have been developed in different regions of the 2 Seas area. Putting together the separate elements results in a strong model which offers different pathways for development and preparation for the labour market. This however, has not been put into practice yet, so at this stage only the separate parts of the model are operational. There are no major obstacles for applying all elements in different regions, but there are a number of aspects to be taken into consideration.

Challenges and action points:

Talent development Instrument:

It is currently available in both English and Dutch. The instrument needs translation into French before it can be used in France. Also the data of the French school system has to be included in the tool.

Studies & internships:

In general it is possible in all 2 Seas areas to have an internship as a part of a vocational study. The Student Company that was created in the Netherlands however, is designed to offer internships to students with (multi)problems. The concept of this student company can be transferred to other European regions, although there are quite a number of conditions that have to be met.
Transnational mobility projects:
The tool for offering (transnational) mobility was developed in France. While working on the tool, an important relation network and a lot of expertise was built up. An major backbone of the tool is formed by a (French) database application. Transferring the tool to other countries will not only imply that documents and software need to be translated, but will also mean that expertise will have to be shared. Additionally, the receiving country will have to determine what possibilities and limitations there are, based on the national law system.

Volunteering:
Volunteer work can be arranged everywhere in the 2 Seas area. Offering high quality coaching and setting out an inspiring program for individuals that have a significant distance to the labour market is another matter. The concept of the volunteering pathway, developed in Ipswich, is unique in more than one way. Applying this concept will demand a great number of conditions.

Strategy for future development
From the SWOT analysis, project partners drew 2 important conclusions, which they intend to put into practice in the near future.

1. Creating conditions
The conclusions of the SWOT analysis indicate that dissemination results will depend on the possibility for other organisations to adapt the YES model or parts of it. Adaptation efforts will be more effective to the extent that the YES partners are able to point out the consequences. To accommodate this demand, implementation manuals for the distinguished elements of the YES model still need to be created. The challenge for the partners is now to create a step-by-step comprehensive manual to help every organisation interested to apply the YES! Model. These manuals should:
• Describe the course of action to undertake in order to import the model in structures: through guidelines and videos, structures working with young people should be able to foresee how to offer these opportunities to their target group;
• Propose solutions to adapt the tools to all countries, despite differences in legislation, educational system, etc.
• Attract new organisations to develop these opportunities as alternative pathways to employment.

2. Active dissemination
In order to get the YES model implemented in different countries, the partners need to actively inform and convince stakeholders about the possibilities of the model and the opportunities for shaping pathways to employment and taking over the YES model or elements of it. The partners consider indeed that mobility, volunteering and internships as described are a part of the solutions for NEET young people. Dissemination to structures and promotion of these opportunities towards the target group are necessary to ensure the success of our model; this could be done through videos of testimonies, photos, social websites, etc.
The target group

The model targets a large variety of actors, who could offer these pathways to young people. The partnership, for the promotion of this model, is targeting similar organisations to those of the YES! Cluster. Those potentially interested:

- in the TDI are HR companies and companies interested in diversity management/talent development, job coaches (public/private), educational structures, employment agencies, welfare centres, sheltered workshops, detention/penitentiary institutions
- in mobility are employment agencies, companies with international branches, NGOs and associations, educational institutes, youth organisations, social and welfare centres
- in school companies are other schools, educational institutes, companies
- in volunteering are welfare centres, social organisations, youth organisations, NGOs and associations
- in media techniques are educational institutes, job coaches, companies, training outplacement, media organisation. NEET young people such job seekers, people at a distance from the labour market are also part of the target group of the YES! cluster.

General conclusion:

The cluster has been a great opportunity for the partners to discover each other tools, to exchange their good practices and enrich their ways of working. They have set up a common system with all the tools which proposes an innovative course of action to increase the employability of young people and help them find a job. The partners consider this system a valuable resource to fight against youth unemployment and youth social exclusion as it addresses both young people and companies, through diversity management. The cluster continues to disseminate these tools to their networks and hopes to be able to propose the necessary guidelines so that a large number of organisations can adopt these practices. Social innovation is necessary to solve unemployment amongst the youth, and the cluster partners hope to have contributed by exploring alternative pathways.

To be updated on the project, please visit ADICE’s website.
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