

“Development of the empowerment of educators and beneficiaries in the field of youth at risk and social exclusion”

The project "Development of the empowerment of educators and beneficiaries in the field of youth at risk and social exclusion" is a response to the aims of the European Union to fight poverty and exclusion. It allows associated professionals to develop and strengthen their skills and employability and directly deals with the issues of inclusion and supporting young at risk.

It was initiated by the Educ-Europe Network consortium of 12 European organizations working in the field of child protection or those belonging to the sector of higher education and vocational training for educators. Established in 2006, the network has since evolved and incorporated new organizations.

Apprentis d’Auteuil, and more specifically its Directorate of HR Development in charge of the training of professionals, is the applicant organization for the project. This foundation acts in France for almost 150 years, fighting against social exclusion of disadvantaged young people and their families (a common area with other partners).

7 other members of the network will be partner organizations of this project: HEB and KDG Belgium, UKW in Poland, CRIPS in Romania, INFA in France, Amigo in Spain and CNOS -SCS in Italy.

As the Educ-Europe partners have been working together for 8 years now, they observed the emergence of common problems, at the origin of the design of this project.

They indeed found that the field of social assistance is now struggling to involve beneficiaries, even though getting each actor to make decisions for his own life would significantly improve the quality and impact of the supporting programmes. To accompany this development the social work education and practice need to help educators questioning on how the empowerment is helping the beneficiaries’ development.

Thus, in a context where problems - including social - transcend borders, all European partners expressed the need to respond to issues of empowerment and social support for minors with issues involving Justice concerning the educational support for young people whose problems require the intervention of Justice on the one hand, and of empowerment and social work with adults living in a highly precarious situation on the other hand.

The real desire of professionals and organizations to enrich their support programs by opening themselves to innovative practices and educational problems met in other EU countries is a facilitating factor.

8 partner organizations, experts in their field of action, collectively built this project in logic of innovation transfer, in a spirit of reciprocity, and with a desire for lasting changes regarding ways of assisting beneficiaries of social work and innovation in training methodologies. They all participate in each stage of the project and mobilize practitioners of social intervention, trainers and beneficiaries or former beneficiaries.

To meet with the objectives of the project, 4 groups (each gathering 2 participants from each partner organization) will meet during 2 sessions of 5 days. All sessions use the methodology of action research to enable participants to use their knowledge from experience, to cross it with the theoretical knowledge and to conduct experimentations. This method of training, active and participatory, combines joint experimentation and reflection to open new opportunities by crossing different points of view and experiences, helping to raise awareness and enabling an enriching exchange of best practices among multidisciplinary actors.

In addition to trainers organizing every action research session, members of Educ-Europe network will meet. They are in charge of coordinating the project, capitalizing results through the production and dissemination of research journals at the end of each session, working on online training modules and organizing the international conference (also organized on a participatory pedagogy based on empowerment) which will end 2 years of partnership.

Programmed deliverables are the following:

-4 research journals

-2 training modules

-1 international seminar

The project's impact will be direct and long-lasting for each participant, holder of an innovative project; for institutions, because of the evolution of content and methods of training for educators, and the improvement of their child protection services; for the entire sector (including other organizations specialized in training) which will then recruit trained educators and thus access the results of the project.

D. Description of the project

Educators must be prepared to be workers without borders, in spirit and in practice. Such designed trainings bring added value for social work institutions employing educators. To meet these challenges we have therefore chosen to launch action research groups on two major topics of concern to all partners:

- Youth at risk with issues involving Justice.
- Adults in a highly precarious situation

We believe that the beneficial findings will be all the richer if two groups have worked on the same theme. Once the changes brought about, the awareness and the gains in each of the participants will also be crucial.

Why action research?

Because it is, in itself an illustration, an implementation of empowerment. To gather around research topics of concern, social intervention stakeholders, trainers and beneficiaries or former beneficiaries from different European countries is deeply innovative and daring.

The "Fondation d'Auteuil" is now once again the project coordinator: four sessions of empowerment following the method of action research. The "Fondation d'Auteuil" will coordinate the consortium complying with a logic of transfer of innovation, as project members have not developed similar projects though they own the expertise to lead with the "Fondation d'Auteuil" these training sessions "research and action".

Moreover, a new long-term partnership strategy for the Educ-Europe network is due to be adopted in late 2014 so as to revive after 7 years of life and perpetuate the consortium beyond the works of the project of the 2014 and 2016 plan.

A "piloting committee" will guide the Educ-Europe consortium and the project to:

- monitor the project's progress,
- harmonize the partners participation and solve problems
- write or frame the educational tools and logs for action research

The piloting committee language is French but English will be used upon request of any of the partners, this applies also for documentation that had already been translated into several languages. Lastly, according to the project schedule, the action research sessions piloting committees will be held just after the piloting committee at the same location. Thus the panel of experts will also contribute to the sessions of action research in the same mission abroad, so that the costs will be more easily controlled.

Expected results:

From September 2014 to June 2015, two action research groups will attend two action research sessions of five days each. One group will focus its research on the issue of **empowerment in the context of social support for minors with issues involving Justice**. The other group will focus its works on the place of **empowerment and social work with adults living in a highly precarious situation**.

The process of action-research, led by two experienced guides is meant to allow for each group and each of the two subjects in the first session:

- to reach a diagnosis
- to identify the common issues and distinguish the issues specific to each enacting country
- to support the exploratory work by crossing them with theoretical concepts
- to build up proposals for concrete and innovative responses likely to be quickly tested (based on empowerment).

The second five-day session with the same people in the same group a few months later will focus on:

- measuring the impact of research conducted at the 1st session in each individual participant and at each of the represented institutions.
- evaluating experiments implemented during the intercession time on the basis of proposals of innovative responses developed during the 1st session (to what extent empowerment was indeed a key factor in solving socio-educational issues?)

What assumptions of results:

- For participating tutors and for their organizations: attending both sessions of action research will have shown them that the resolution of socio-educational issues should as much as possible go through the mobilization of personal resources, and the attempt to help the beneficiaries of social action to be autonomous. It will especially allow them to experience a process of working through action research that has helped to fundamentally change their relationship to knowledge;
- For participating educators and their organizations: the first result will be to establish a relationship of trust and cooperation between social stakeholders through two shared five-day sessions. They will especially see that mingling fieldwork experience and theoretical knowledge can be profitable.

- For beneficiaries or former beneficiaries: bringing one's own contribution to finding solutions and be associated with professionals on equal footing are assets that will help to build the future.

E.1. Project Management

The project schedule will be deepened in the first "piloting committee". All partners, at this meeting, will be able to enhance this planning in the sessions of action research, the production of diaries or training modules as well as the organization of the final seminar.

Once the budget is provided by the European Agency, the coordinator will ask all European partners the following operation:

- management fees allocated to each of the eight organizations will be entirely paid
- sums intended for international seminar at the end of the project will be donated to the Amigo foundation
- all other sums will be paid to partners every six months upon claim for reimbursement and submission of supporting documents
- a multilateral agreement will be signed in November 2014.

Evaluation

The department which will focus on oversight, medium-term evaluations and final evaluation of the project is the piloting committee Educ-Europe.

Achievement indicators that will be considered are:

- have the two sessions of action research of each of the four groups being held in the locations and scheduled dates AND with the expected people?
- Research journals: have they been developed and broadcasted in time?
- The contents of these journals: are they usable for organizing the symposium in 2016 and for the development of two new modules of e-learning?
- Have budgets been respected?
- The three types of participants (trainers, social workers, current and former beneficiaries): were they well represented in a balanced way in each group?
- The work of each group in the first sessions: did it allow that experimental activities be designed? If so, have they been tested during the recess period?

F. Implementation

Core activities of the project will be essentially fourfold:

1. the two five day sessions experienced by each of the 4 groups of Action Research
2. writing and distribution to participants of research journal after each session (see Section F.2.1 - O1)
3. the production of training modules (see section F.2.1 - O2)
4. the international conference in May 2016 in Madrid coordinated by Amigo Foundation. This event will

obviously bring together participants from the four successive groups of action research and partners' representatives,

The targeted audiences of the project:

- They will be professionals of social work intervention (social workers, social service assistant agents).
- The tutors of social workers in their critical period or in lifelong learning.
- Beneficiaries or ancient beneficiaries of social work.

F2- The activities of project-01 Research reports

The research report is an essential tool within a research-action progression.

Managed by the leaders' duo, its role is reporting about the research approaches led by the group all through every session. This paper is by far more than a plain record and therefore needs an important elaboration of post-session results.

Two teams questioning each other about one work theme simultaneously during the sessions. Consequently, the diary produced at the end of them requires a considerable work made of two parts, one for each work theme.

The first session groups will go on working during the second session while the third session groups will carry on with during the fourth session. The periodical "number one" will then be completed by "number two"; and "number three" will be finished off by "number four".

The e-mail diffusion aimed at the participants under pdf format will have to be effective along the four weeks following the end of a session. A provisional version will first be sent. Each and every one participant indeed will be expected to validate its contents within a three weeks deadline. They will be able if need be to propose modifications for the parts concerning them.

Each paper will be written in French and/or in English, these languages usually used up to now in the established structure for Educ-Europe exchanging.

F2- The project's realisation-02 Pedagogical Units

The "Erasmus project" is going to allow the birth of two new units one for each of both theme. The first training module will deal with the application of the concept of empowerment and social work with adults living in a highly precarious situation. It will be structured on the results exchanged by the two successive groups of action-research that will have worked on the matter between 2014 and 2015, then 2015 and 2016. For this reason, its progressive elaboration will be stretching from May 2015 (end of the first session's work) to February 2016 (end of the second session's work).

The module is expected to give the students a global vision of the situation at the European level, in the "compared educational innovative plans based on that concept.

The coordination in the elaboration of the scheme will be attributed to INFA.

Second training module is about the empowerment in the context of social support to minors with issues involving Justice. This construction work will be coordinated by "Fondation d'Auteuil"

G2- dissemination and exploitation of the project results

The dissemination strategy presented and proposed by “Apprentis d’Auteuil” will undergo a validation by the first “piloting committee” of the plan by the end of 2014. It then will be put into shared practice with every partner’s communication organs especially with the direction of the communication of “Apprentis d’Auteuil”. In coordination with the training experts INFA administers and elaborates the matters of thematic courses to propose to the beneficiaries of the programme (students, tutors, supervisors) in multi-languages.

INFA will organise more particularly the diffusion of the training modules.

These modules will actually be diffused via the site of Educ-Europe: www.educ-europe.ue

Information on the project will be available through the intern and extern sites of partners.