

New directions in NEET prevention through teacher capacity building
Open The Doors | An Erasmus+ Project



New Directions in NEET prevention through teacher capacity building

A Partnership between:

-  P1 Associació Educativa Vall del Terri - Spain
-  P2 Kontiki-Szakkepzo Zrt – Hungary
-  P3 Associação para a Educação de Segunda Oportunidade - Portugal
-  P4 Educa international, o.p.s. – Czech Republic
-  P5 Scoala Gimnaziala Nr5 Piatra Neamt - Romania
-  P6 University of Chester – UK
-  P7 Euricon – The Netherlands
-  P8 University of Glasgow – UK
-  P9 Working with Europe - Spain

Editors: Dr George Head (University of Glasgow)
Barbara Brodigan (Euricon)
Sub Editor: Steven Markham (University of Chester)

Project Coordinator: Anna Casas (Associació Educativa Vall del Terri – Cancuní)

Graphic Design & Layout: Steven Markham (University of Chester)

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Introduction to the Guidelines

Open the Doors was implemented between September 2015 and August 2017. As an Erasmus+ Project, the aim was for the project to be experiential. We experienced new didactics for NEET prevention (new opportunities for youth in risk of social exclusion) through building 21st century didactic capacity among the professional staff involved in the project settings: teachers, social educators and youth educators.

The Project mission was based on the belief that, given the appropriate learning contexts and opportunities, potential NEET youth and NEET youth are indeed able to develop strong intellectual, creative and learning capacities. The project was informed by an assumption that an entrepreneurial approach would underpin initial thinking. However, as the European Commission says: "Teachers cannot teach how to be entrepreneurial without themselves being entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurial competency and skills can be acquired or built only through hands-on, real life learning experiences". (Entrepreneurial Education: A Guide for Educators, 2013). Consequently, the Project was designed around an innovative and practical way of working with youth at risk of social exclusion.

The future-oriented methodologies were:

- *Real-life learning: building capacity through engaging in problems and challenges important for the community and the surrounding world.*
- *Learning in mixed realities: building capacity through fully integrating physical and virtual realities in the work processes, also inviting a linking of the local and global.*
- *Working with the community: building capacity through creating partnerships with a variety of community players from education and private enterprises to NGO's and local authorities.*
- *Entrepreneurial initiative taking: building capacity through creating projects based on identifying community needs and interest and taking action on these needs and interests.*
- *Using creative technology: building capacity through documenting their work and learning processes with creative media and sharing experience through professional, social and gaming networks.*

The Guidelines contain the experiences and results from those different methodologies. Capacity building of the educators came from the interaction between such innovative practical experimentation and the collective reflections systematically included in the project.

We have been a partnership of nine organizations: five Practice partners, three Knowledge Partners and one Quality Assurance Partner. Please refer to the website www.openthedoors.eu for more detailed information.

Using the Guidelines

The Guidelines are not intended to provide or replace the real-life experiences suggested above. Instead, they offer a series of examples of missions and explanations of what made them successful. The structure of the Guidelines reflects the thinking and working of the Open the Doors partners. At the outset, we were aware that working with young people not in employment, education or training meant different things to different people and was similarly variously conceptualised in different countries and cultures. We began, therefore, by exploring the profiles of the young people with whom we work and what it meant to create the choices and chances that would help them. In other words, what it meant to work with a mission.

We were also concerned that our work should not begin with theory but be led by practice, which should then inform theory. Open the Doors, therefore, was an exercise in theory building as it arose from working with the missions and our own continued learning. If the missions provide inspiration and motivation for similar projects, then by all means explore the possibility of creating a similar mission of your own. Do not try to import them from here and simply replicate them but consider what would be appropriate in your own context. It is important, therefore, when thinking about the missions not only to consider what took place but how they were created and progressed and why they were successful.

The second section of the Guidelines the five major themes that arose from our experiences of and reflections on the practical initiatives; the missions. Understanding our various contexts, how our thinking and mindset developed of the life of Open the Doors and how we worked with young people in the missions will help you understand a mission as we conceptualise it and support you in creating your own.

Section 3 contains the partners' narrative account of working in Open the Doors. We have also included our thoughts on the goals, the methodologies of Open the Doors that became increasingly important as the project progressed, and which developed through our growing understanding of the missions and our continued learning regarding working with young people at risk of social exclusion. This section also contains a brief account of the story of Open the Doors itself and some inspirational materials that provided insight into the distinctive way of working in the project and motivated us to overcome difficulties and barriers and seize the opportunities that arose in our different contexts. The sections in the Guidelines, therefore, can be used as materials for thinking. Each section provides opportunities for youth workers, teachers and students to create their own experiential learning opportunities using the model of a mission.

Acknowledgement and Thanks

All partners in the Open the Doors project acknowledge the support and opportunity provided by the Erasmus+ programme.

We would like to thank the European Commission for their creativity and resourcefulness, which allowed this project to take place.

We are immensely grateful to the Commission and Erasmus+ for the chance to work together with such committed and enthusiastic partners from across Europe.

Open the Doors has been an enriching experience, which was only able to happen through the good auspices of the European Commission

Essential Points

- Learn to work with a mission
- Be prepared to change mindsets; your own, your young peoples, colleagues, the wider community
- Work with influential individuals, groups and organisations in the community
- Engage with local authorities and national governments

Section 2: Themes



INTRODUCTION

The themes discussed in this section are those that arose over the life of the project. They were not specified at the beginning of the project but emerged as partners engaged with the work of the project, and through discussion and debate in partnership meetings. Although they are addressed as separate themes, they are not discrete but interlinked and dependent on each other.

The practice partner narratives, from which this section is drawn, appear on the surface to be very different and this reflects the differing contexts, cultures and countries in which they exist. The starting point in the former central/eastern European countries was very different from that in the western European countries. Perhaps for them, therefore, finding new ways of working with young people to create more choices and chances was an even more daunting task with greater cultural and even political barriers to overcome.

Notwithstanding that, each of the missions displays a degree of commonality with the others both in terms of initial issues faced and in the ways in which the partners addressed them. For example, the young people all come from a position of disadvantage, whether that be social as in the case of EDUCA, Matosinhos and Cancuni, or racial as for Roma youngsters. Vasco, Filipe and the young people from Cancuni can be considered culturally disadvantaged and all appear to come from economically deprived backgrounds. It is important for future work with young people that we realise that whilst our situations may be distinctive, they are not unique.

Context

At the start of this section, it is important to set out the contexts in which the projects took place because context is the circumstance that forms the setting for an event, statement, or idea. In doing this it will help the reader to fully understand the circumstances in which the partners were working and how this shaped the content of and approaches to the missions.

Geographically each participating country forms part of the continent of Europe. While there are many similarities between the countries, within Europe there is also a diverse range of customs, practices and cultures that result in quite substantial differences. In an educational context, these differences relate to policy, system structures, political context, funding, teacher education and pedagogy. Each of these aspects can potentially have an impact on how schools and educators approach a mission.

Despite their different contexts, the young people in Open the Doors had one thing in common: they had disengaged with the mainstream school systems within each country. This common issue meant that participants embarked on the missions aiming for the same outcome – a re-engagement of the learner - but acknowledgement of the different contexts meant that while ideas could be shared, identical outcomes were not guaranteed. Crucially, the acknowledgement of the contextual differences offered participants an opportunity to critique their own cultural settings. They could then adopt and adapt ideas from the missions as appropriate or develop ideas within their own missions that took account of context.

Lessons learned

Go Outside the School

In each project, success was achieved through moving the learning outside of the school to engage with local communities. In the case of [Cancuni](#), this meant a gradual physical move out of the classroom to a market garden mission ([See Annex A1](#)) within the school grounds, to a temporary move into the local community for a one-off event mission ([See Annex A1](#)), and a shift completely out of school and into another town, where they met and worked with young people in public spaces ([See Annex A1](#)). For [Matosinhos](#), this meant a mixture of working outside the school and also doing different things in the school ([See Annex A2](#)), whilst for [Educa](#), [Kontiki](#) and [School 5](#), there was a focus on encouraging young people to work in local contexts outside the school such as in catering, fabric, arts and music. In all cases, this was part of a shift away from a traditional, in-school context in which young people were supported through a traditional curriculum. Moving outside the school also discouraged a

student perception that, regardless of how 'different' the work they are doing is from 'normal', it is still a school activity ([See Annex A1](#)). The physical shift of going outside the school assisted the conceptual, intellectual and emotional shifts that occurred in other parts of the experience of Open the Doors. Unfamiliar contexts challenged the identities that young people and adults begin with and help generate new identities through lived experiences. See sections on mindset, working with young people and working with the missions.

Relationships between adults and young people will/must change

Working outside of the classroom and the school encourages a different relationship between adults and young people. Responsibility for learning and behaviour becomes shared and is no longer the exclusive domain of the teacher ([See Annex A1](#) & [Annex A2](#)). Even in fairly formal contexts, responsibility is shifted on to the young people in terms of getting themselves to their place of work/learning and how they conduct themselves there ([see Annex A5](#)). Through experiencing changing relationships, young people and adult workers begin to rethink their identities and the roles they play in each other's lives. From that point, they think about and reconceptualise their relationships with others.

Take a holistic approach

Success in the missions entailed a change in the learning context from traditional subject-centred to a more holistic person-centred ethos. This can take the form of an interdisciplinary approach across a range of activities ([See Annex A2](#)), setting up an inclusion programme ([See Annex A4](#)), or a single activity such as School 5's 'Story of my life', allowing the young people to explore themselves ([See Annex A5](#)). A holistic approach to learning encourages adults to see the young person in entirety and not just their faults. Similarly, for the young people, a holistic experience helps shift a focus on themselves from deficit to one in which they begin to realise that they have qualities, dispositions, skills and abilities that others appreciate and value.

Groups and group dynamics are significant

Young people working in a group was considered more effective than individual work ([See Annex A1](#)), although within groups, young people might have their own learning and development plan ([see Annex A2](#)). Group size and group dynamics are important and can shift and change, thereby requiring constant monitoring. Working in groups enhances learning and development as ideas will be questioned and challenged and will require justification. Working in groups also demands cooperation, planning and participation, sometimes with people or ideas whom/which they do not fully understand. This experience entails increasing respect for others and through that, respect for the self.

Media

Linking with media gives young people and their actions a public profile. Being in the public eye through engagement with local radio, television and press, helps engender feelings of self-respect, self-efficacy and reciprocity with the local community ([see Annex A2](#)). Similarly, production of their own videos and social media results in feelings of achievement, success and pride ([see Annex A2](#)).

Engage with local and national policy

In addition to legal requirements in each country, engaging with local and national politicians and policy makers helps establish working with NEETs, particularly in the second chance school context, as a legitimate and worthwhile pursuit. A move out of school, therefore, entails not only young people and learning activities but school managers and other adults thinking beyond the school walls and advocating for their young people in the wider educational and social context. Just as the physical shift outside the schools benefits young people, so the intellectual agility required to engage at local and national levels enhances adults' knowledge of the wider educational and political environment. Exploring, understanding and questioning policy deepens their understanding of how to be flexible, creative and innovative in their work with young people, whilst demonstrating that they and the young people form part of the national community, thereby enhancing the status of second chance education ([see Annex A2](#)).

Youth Worker Mindset

The second of the themes drawn up at the Glasgow meeting was that of Mindset. The partners have been engaging in innovative missions and practices with the underpinning aim of exploring new ways to support young people who have become disengaged or excluded from educational opportunities that would otherwise be available. Disengagement can arise from the young people themselves and likewise educators who give up in their support efforts can prompt exclusion. These two can each precipitate the other so that the two directions of action can be interrelated and entwined and the overall effect can be complete disaffection. The starting point for this disjunction can be obscured so that it can be difficult to pinpoint the precipitating factors. The partners have been looking at missions and practices to try to address both the responses and actions of the young people as well as the educators' own dispositions and beliefs about learning. Considerations of Mindset entered into the discussions in Glasgow. This has been brought into focus by Carol S Dweck (2007) who observed that success in any form of human endeavor could be influenced by the ways in which individuals perceive of themselves and by their beliefs about their ability to achieve anything. Thus, the participants were attempting to motivate the young people in their missions to find ways of achieving success as well as motivating themselves to be open to more creative and flexible ways of engaging with them as partners. This notion of mindset can potentially be powerful for participants in the missions.

Lessons Learned

Changing Mindset

Organisations need to be aware of the challenge of changing the mindset of youth workers from educator to facilitator and of their role in this process. Depending on the national or local structures of education, the different cultures of countries and the situation of the school within the structure, the teaching methodology of the educator varies from directive teacher-led learning (as illustrated in Hungary, The Czech Republic and Romania) to more informal approaches of collaborative or student-led learning as seen in Spain and Portugal. Capacity building of teachers is important to build capacity in young people. This will evolve over time, as youth workers embrace the new methodology of student-led learning through missions. For educators this is a "learning by doing process" alongside which, specific training in new methodologies should be provided- to enable young people become entrepreneurial the educators must be entrepreneurial themselves.

Building Effective Relationships

Capacity building of both youth workers and young people needs the foundation of an equitable relationship, which is based on mutual trust created through practical collaboration, in order to be effective. In other words, trust and respect will be built along and through the joint ventures, the work relationship and the actions that have been undertaken in the missions.

Improved relationships between youth workers and youth at Cancuni made the young people feel more valued because they were listened to while at Kontiki the “we can do it together” approach rather than “you do it” demonstrated the changed mindset of educators normally used to the directive tone of mainstream schools. At Matosinhos their ethos is “First connect, then correct”, having always recognised that a different approach is needed to that of mainstream schools. Relationships are built through a practical activity approach, which advocates a flexible team-based collaboration. Teachers and parents have quite different relationships with young people, teachers need to distinguish the difference between a good connection to a too close one. At Kontiki the educators learned the need to put up some sort of a border and to keep a healthy space between students and teachers, giving the students the necessary support which they can lean against when they need to. ([Kontiki; Youth Worker Mindset](#))

Being Flexible

Flexibility is a key component of a changed mindset in educators as demonstrated in stories from Cancuni (where youth workers sometimes work in pairs), Matosinhos (where the youth worker acts as a facilitator or sometimes takes the lead) and Kontiki (where the youth worker recognises that every situation can be a tool for learning). Dealing with the unexpected is an everyday experience for educators working with disadvantaged young people, whose multiple barriers to social and economic inclusion impacts on their capacity to engage consistently in learning. Personal, social, and other issues should be addressed along the way if they present obstacles to the progression of the missions.

Multiple Roles

Traditionally in mainstream education the teacher had one role, that of imparting knowledge through a teacher- led approach to learning. Youth workers in this project recognised that he/she has multiple roles, not just as facilitator but also as a mentor, broker and mediator among others ([Educa: Youth Worker Mindset](#); [Matosinhos: Youth Worker Mindset](#)). The mentor role involves being emphatic, understanding, and listening, paying attention to the young people's interests, while at the same time introducing the "reality principle" of the broker role and not avoiding constructive and (sometimes) necessary confrontations. The mediator acts as the bridge between learning and working, supporting the student in juggling, ordering and prioritising personal life experiences against work life expectations.

Working With Youth At Risk Of Social Exclusion

Young people who are at risk of social exclusion as a consequence (among other things) of a poor experience of schooling, has been a central concern across Europe and the developed world. Such young men and women frequently find themselves no longer in education usually as a result of reaching the school leaving age or dropping out beforehand or through exclusion. Moreover, it is difficult for them to find or sustain appropriate post-school college placements, training courses or even work, hence the tendency to refer to them as Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). Grouping large numbers of young people in this fashion is suggestive of homogeneity and stereotyping. Open the Doors prefers to think that the choices and chances experienced by the young people with whom we work were inadequate or inappropriate for their advancement in society. Consequently, in our various roles of supporting them, we are driven to offer them more choices and chances to complement and enhance the talents, skills and abilities they already possess.

The signatories to the Timisoara Declaration (Education organisations) argued that currently, education and schooling are unattractive to young people and that this is contributing to disaffection and drop-out. In turn, young people are finding it increasingly difficult to enter the labour market, resulting in increasing social exclusion. Open the Doors aimed to engage with disadvantaged young people in ways that they find relevant, meaningful and inspiring in order to eradicate the 'inevitability of social exclusion'.

Lessons learned

Give responsibility to the young people

Success in each of the missions entailed nurturing autonomy in the young people and creating the opportunities for them to exercise it. This can take the form of the group accepting responsibility for a mission in their own right ([See Annex A1](#)) or in conjunction with other members of the community (See [Annex A2](#) & [Annex A4](#)) or, indeed as individuals ([See Annex A5](#)). Giving young people responsibility and opportunities, offers them experiences that will challenge negative perceptions of themselves through the generation of a different identity related to ability and capability.

Seek support from others

In the introduction to this section, we indicated that although different, the partner organisations are not unique. Neither are they alone, and neither are the young people with whom they work. Work with young people benefited from the support of local groups ([See Annex A2](#)) and influential individuals within the community ([See Annex A1](#)). In other cases, seeking support also included linking with the European second chance schools network E2C ([See Annex A5](#)). Indeed, 'support' was a feature of the overall Open the Doors experience as the partners learned from each other. Learning with and through others not only increases the adults' repertoire of skills and strategies, but also enhances feelings of belonging to a wider support community. The resultant feeling of belonging and contributing, transfer from adult to young person (see next learning point).

First work with adults

In each of the missions, there was considerable shift in the mindset of the adults. In some this was something that developed over the course of Open the Doors ([See Annex A1](#) & [Annex A2](#)) whilst in others, it was a prerequisite to working with the young people ([See Annex A5](#) & [Annex A4](#)). Working with the adults in reconceptualising their perceptions of young people and their roles and relationships in working with them is essential preparation for working with missions that take both adults and young people into unfamiliar territory. The better prepared are the adults, the richer the experience will be for the young people.

To summarise, successful engagement with young people at risk of social exclusion entailed the following features:

- A change in how the school operates, including moving out of the school
- Ideas were generated by the young people
- The young people took responsibility for and ran the missions
- A different mindset emerged in teachers
- A different mindset emerged from youngsters.
- Commonalities were autonomy, opportunity, choice, responsibility, support

Working With The Missions

Based on the following argument and a desire to distinguish our work from traditional approaches, the Quality Assurance partner recommended the term mission:

The word MISSION is borrowed from computer gaming. Good computer games take the player through different levels of challenges and tasks that must be accomplished to complete the... mission. Often new levels are more complicated to accomplish than the first ones, and often you will need the resources created along the first levels to accomplish the tasks at later levels.

This means that you accumulate resources and skills along the different levels; precisely the skills and resources you will need to accomplish your mission. Therefore, you cannot simply jump to the last level, because you will not have the skills and resources to be successful at that level. And therefore you cannot change the order or sequence of the levels, as each level will create the needed capacity to accomplish tasks at the next level. Most young people are very familiar with this "logic"; it's in their blood. Therefore, we believe that this "computer game language" is useful when working with NEET youth.

Working with the missions required the adults in Open the Doors to think and behave in ways different to what they had done previously. The support materials generated by the quality assurance partner indicated a didactical approach based on a particular conceptualisation of entrepreneurship. This involved the mission originating from the young people themselves and being focused on making beneficial change for them and the communities in which they live. There was encouragement to engage with new technology and to recruit from and work in conjunction with the wider community. This guidance was posited on the [European Commission's Entrecomp document](#). This document contained a suggested range of competences that constitute entrepreneurialism including, spotting opportunities, creativity and vision, taking the initiative, coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk, and working with others. These competencies describe the aspired development of both young people and the adults who work with them. They therefore underpin how the adults and young people worked with the missions.

Lessons learned

Understanding a mission

Understanding the nature of a mission was core to successful working. Some appeared to have a firm grasp of what a mission is from the outset ([See Annex A1](#)) although this was refined through experience (See [Annex A2](#) & Annex A1 – [San Jordi](#) & [Banyoles](#)). For others, the educational, political and social contexts constrained creation of a mission as defined here. Consequently, whilst all partners had missions with a focus on young people, some were realised in familiar contexts whilst others focused on the adults ([See Annex A5](#)) as preparation for understanding and working with a mission. Understanding a mission is significant in shifting mindsets, and how learning contexts might be different. Understanding a mission was the consideration that generated the other themes and is, therefore, at the heart of working with young people.

Moving away from tradition

As indicated in the previous learning point, the further the mission was from traditional learning and teaching, the more it matched the model suggested in Open the Doors. For Kontiki, School No5 and EDUCA, the starting point was dealing with a tradition of education that privileged teaching and systems over learning ([See Annex A5](#)). In the cases of Kontiki and School 5, the practice colleagues demonstrated a high level of self-awareness in the need to provide training and professional development for teachers whilst for EDUCA, the starting point was dealing with a highly prescriptive system in which colleagues were constrained by national and local policy.

Nevertheless, each practice partner achieved the overall aim of shifting to a learner led regime in which the young people are at the centre of the mission. Challenging traditional ways of learning is current in all learning contexts, not just second chance schools but second chance schools working with missions, can be at the forefront of generating new ways of learning for all children and young people. Thus, second chance schools and working with missions will make a significant and valuable contribution to the advancement of education, generally.

Real-life learning

Each of the missions engaged in real-life learning that enhanced or had the potential to enhance their communities. Enhancement could take the form of cultural ([See Annex A2](#)), informative ([See Annex A1](#)) and potentially economic ([See Annex A4 & Annex A5](#)) through leading to participation in the labour market. Making real changes creates satisfaction and a sense of achievement, again challenging negative identities through experience.

Working with the community

Engaging with the local community featured in the missions. This was working with and for young people of similar or different backgrounds, (Matosinhos, Cancun), cultures (Kontiki, School No5), ages and economic circumstances (Matosinhos, Educa).

Working with communities brought the young people into contact with others whom they might not have otherwise encountered or felt with whom they did not belong. In turn, this helped change their perspectives on others and others' perspectives on them.

Recognition of skills, abilities and achievements

This is both a starting point for working with the missions but also a developmental experience for the young people. Acknowledging what young people bring to a mission is a task of working with the missions and is often an enlightening experience for young people when they realise that they have skills and abilities and that other people value and appreciate them. At the beginning of a mission, young people often doubt their own abilities. However, as they work with others to generate the mission, and to make it work, self-awareness of an increasing sense of achievement and being in control of their own lives, develops ([See Annex A2](#)).

Perspectives – Opportunities

Perspectives and opportunities provide the understanding necessary for sustainability of the Open the Doors project. Reflecting on what happened during the life of the project enables us to impart our experiences to others with the intention of providing insight and practical knowledge. In a similar way, projection of ideas both in the particular, related to individual missions, and in the general allows us to demonstrate how we envisage working with this approach. Since Open the Doors aims to be practical and future oriented, reflection and projection are both essential. More information related to the points raised here can be found in the narratives in the Annex. As with the themes above, each of the aspects below are not discrete but dependent on and interact with each other.

Mission

Understanding a mission is key to working with young people in this approach. As indicated in the narratives later in these Guidelines, grasping the nature of a mission required experimenting. Through this experiential process, practice partners gradually developed insight into how a mission was different from traditional ways of working with young people, including some that purport to offer a degree of autonomy to youngsters. The main realisation for teachers and youth workers was that it is not enough to give young people choice from a menu, they must generate the menu themselves.

Confidence and Trust

Developing confidence and trust around a mission was, perhaps, the most significant issue for adults working with youth at risk. Youth workers and teachers grew in confidence in the young people to create ideas but also trust in them to pursue their ideas to successful conclusion. Similarly, they had to cultivate confidence and trust in their own skills and abilities to work in this way with young people. Visible positive impact of the missions on young people had a significant influence on adults' confidence and trust.

External factors

Members of the wider community, influential individuals, local and national political figures and the media played significant roles across the missions. Young people previously hidden, became visible and valued members of the community. The young people came to appreciate others with whom they might otherwise not have engaged, consequently forming a different opinion of them. Likewise, the people with whom they worked saw the young people in a new light, even offering further opportunities for engagement in the community. In some cases, media reports on the missions not only brought the projects to the forefront of the community but enhanced the positive profile of the young people and the second chance schools.

Working towards a mission

A consensus among partners is that working in a mission requires taking a long-term perspective. Change is gradual and does not happen overnight. Experimenting with and experience of several missions helps change young people's perspective regarding themselves and others. It also helps adults change and shift their mindsets and ways of working with young people. There is no substitute for experience. Setting up a mission group requires teachers and youth workers to be proactive, identify appropriate young people for the group and consider the group dynamic carefully. When considering with whom in the community you will work, remember that other generations, younger and older, tend to be less judgemental of our young people.

Policy Recommendations

Education is a political matter and political activity on the part of the partners was essential to their success. Sometimes this was at the level of local or national politics, engaging with municipal councillors and members of national parliaments. At other times, political activity equalled social engagement with influential individuals and the media in order to raise the school's profile.

As part of our political mission, we would like to challenge use of the term NEET. First, in the context of second chance schools, it is not accurate. More importantly, it is pejorative and redolent of deficit; it is suggestive of young people who are NOT and implies inability or lack of willingness on their part. The focus, therefore, tends to be on what they are not or cannot do or be and the implied approach, therefore, would be to compensate for that lack. Instead, we prefer to think that the chances and choices experienced by our young people have not allowed them to engage with their rights to be an active, valued and appreciated member of the community.

Our approach, therefore, is one of support and provision of the choices and chances that will allow young people to engage with others in a creative and entrepreneurial way.

Open the Doors Guide

Innovative projects such as Open the Doors often produce important knowledge and evidence that should be used to inform and improve policy and decision-making.

Open the Doors did indeed produce such evidence and this evidence is, in the form of policy recommendations, summarized below.

The European societies are producing substantial numbers of young people in NEET situations, and this problem is not likely to disappear in the near or in the far future.

Open the Doors addressed the didactic principles (or the lack of such principles) governing any form of second chance education for such NEETs, whereas the project was not directly concerned with NEET prevention in the formal education system.

Thus the project basically asked the question:

“What kind of innovative didactics and learning approaches might succeed in re-engaging those young people in various forms of non-formal contexts?”

One of the backgrounds to this interest is, of course, the well-known fact that 1 euro invested in qualified secondary chancing in the short run will save society 10 euro in the long run.

However, Open the Doors evidenced a line of serious obstacles to innovate second chance schooling for NEETs, and these obstacles are addressed in the form of policy recommendations.

Key Obstacles to innovation in second chance schooling for NEETS

INTEREST: Lack of societal interest and respect

Beyond various policy rhetoric it is evident that there is little real interest among societal decision-makers and stakeholders in trying to develop useful measures to offer NEETs new and more efficient ways out of the disengagement.

The lack of interest is accompanied by a lack of respect for NEETs and for the organisations and staff involved in second chance schooling and similar.

Very often, such organisations are fighting to survive financially and it is not career enhancing to be a youth worker in such organisations.

RESOURCES: Lack of funding

Organisations in the field of second chance schooling for NEETs are, whether public or private, extremely badly funded.

The funding, for which such institutions must fight each and every year, is very basic and covers only the most necessary costs.

The funding of such organisations does not leave any room for the experimentation and innovation desperately needed in the field of re-engaging NEETs.

Unlike other and more fashionable educational fields, society at large does not seem to be willing to take any responsibility for re-engaging NEETs: it is extremely difficult, almost impossible, to motivate private companies, bank funds and similar to co-finance the re-engagement of NEETs, whether at local or national level.

In the rare cases of such private co-funding, the funded “projects” are often isolated from the second chance organisations and do not support the long-term and sustainable capacity of second chance schooling to successfully re-engage groups of NEETs.

In short, excluded youth is at the bottom of the priority list, which – obviously – contributes to the exclusion.

MENTALITY: Repeating the exclusion

One of the most important obstacles to successful re-engagement of NEETs through innovative didactics is a prejudice towards NEETs dominating all society: from policy-makers to second chance schools and youth workers.

The prejudice goes like this:

“NEETs have by definition limited intellectual development capacity and therefore all we can offer them is small practical tasks and challenges, from which they might grow an ability to manage small jobs in society”

This assumption runs tacitly and invisibly through the entire society and reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of what NEETs are and how intellectual capacity is developed.

If such prejudices control decision-making and educational practice, societal stakeholders will be less motivated to engage in innovation of second chance schooling.

Such prejudices, of course, repeat and double the exclusion.

CHANGE: Lack of innovative 21st century didactics

Several innovative learning didactics have been developed in recent years and the principles of those innovative didactics are widely and openly available.

However, there has been no uptake of such innovative learning principles in most second chance contexts across Europe.

Most of the recently developed innovative didactics include learning principles highly relevant to NEETs.

NEETS are not disengaged from learning in general, but disengaged from traditional schooling and classroom teaching: disengaged from learning styles based on academic schooling.

Many innovative learning principles will clearly benefit NEETs and support the re-engagement in learning and capacity building, but if the dominant attitude towards NEETs is that they are only capable of simple, practical activities, then why be concerned with innovative didactics?

Neither second chance schools as organisations nor their staff has been trained to practice such innovative didactics that might help NEETs overcome the resistance to learning.

Summarizing the above described obstacles, we can conclude that re-engaging NEETs in learning is “against all odds”.

Policy Recommendations

Local / National

- Take initiatives to re-think second chance schooling locally and nationally among public authorities responsible for NEET organisations, including through long-term innovation strategies; seek qualified consultancy
- Include in annual budgets free financial resources for development work in the second chance institutions
- Launch Calls to offer grants to institutions and partnerships wishing to innovate second chance schooling through pilot projects
- Allow second chance institutions to work on a 3 or 4 year budget basis instead for the typical annual basis
- Offer NEET institution managers and staff training in innovation of re-engaging NEETs in learning, integrated in their everyday professional practice; seek qualified consultancy
- Create cross-sector partnerships locally or regionally in support of the innovation of NEET's re-engagement in learning
- Promote and support among NEET institutions the sharing with other second chance institutions, locally, nationally and at European level

Policy Recommendations (continued)

European

- Launch European-wide educational initiatives dedicated to identify what innovative didactics work for NEETs, why they work and which didactics do not work, and disseminate the results systematically in the sector
- Launch Horizon calls focused on studying the long-term effects of innovative learning strategies for NEETs
- Launch Horizon calls focused on studying in detail what kind of didactic strategies and learning approaches have the capacity to re-engage NEETs in learning in a long-term perspective
- Plan and launch a European conference on innovative didactic for NEETs, possibly linked to the above initiatives
- Reinforce significantly the Erasmus+ sections for development of innovation of NEETs re-engagement in learning (Schools and Youth)
- Launch initiatives and campaigns to prevent and counter the widespread prejudice among evaluators and national agencies that youth and NEET projects are smaller projects not in need of attention and not in need of substantial budgets and resources
- Clarify and emphasize in the Erasmus+ Guide and priorities the need for strong didactic experimentation in the field of re-engaging NEETs in learning, and include basic principles such as open schooling, entrepreneurial learning, mission based learning and real-life learning supported by cross-sector partnerships

Section 3: Annexes

Annex A: [Narratives](#)

Annex B: [The Story of Open the Doors](#)

Annex C: [Materials Used to Inform and Initiate the Project](#)

Annex A1: Cancuni, Girona, Spain

CONTEXT

The Cancuni Education and Learning Centre is an educational space that includes 42 young people between the ages of 14 and 16 years. UEC Cancuni offers these young people a space where a Basic Programme for instrumental and pre-employment learning is used with another type of rhythm and with an active methodology that moves away from the educational approaches of the ordinary education system. Our methodology is based on the development of the different types of capacities of the students: cognitive, motor, personal balance, relationship and social and labour insertion.

We propose an essentially manipulative and active work methodology, based on the rotation of workshops, instrumental areas, ICT techniques, sports, activities related to expression and communication and leisure activities. Fundamentally, we value the work of social skills and relational habits.



We are working with a group of five young people that we have selected among our students. During the first year of the Project implementation, we have seen that a big group is not easy to work with because they get too distracted. The criteria for selecting the group has been: all young people need to live in the same city, a mixture of boys and girls and they have to be in the last year of our school.

We understood the mission of the project as a group work rather than individual work. We believe that the group work brings more ideas



that develop better than working individually. At the same time, we can work on the potential of each group member.



The main challenge was to do the activities outside the school. At the beginning, the youth did not understand very well what we were going to do. Once the project was on, the youth were very enthusiastic about this new format. Outside the school building, young people show themselves more spontaneous and creative; they also bring more ideas.

During the first phase, we did not give much thought to the context. This fact meant that young people perceived the project as part of the activities in Cancuní and did not capture the uniqueness of the proposal. We overcame this in the second phase of the project. Young people lived the project more intensely and increased their involvement in it.

Another positive action has been the development of young people in new contexts they did not know. They learned to adapt behaviour in settings other than school. We removed them from the field of formal education and immersed them in other environments.

YOUTH WORKER MINDSET

The big challenge here was to evolve from the educator role to the facilitator role and then on to broker role. Our way to relate with youth needed to change and we needed to establish a relationship between equals. At the beginning, it was difficult for the young people to understand this change in the role. Today, it is no longer like this, but they still expect that adults will be taking the initiatives. Talking about the group of young people that we are doing the mission with, we realize that their personal difficulties outside the school have a big influence on their participation in the school activities. We have seen that sometimes they have been through very complex personal situations, which made them lose interest in the mission. In those cases, we felt that our role needed to be more active in order to keep moving with the mission. This makes us think that we do not have to be only on the facilitator role but also take the role of leader.

We think that to implement this project, it has been very useful to be two professionals working together instead of only one, as we thought at the beginning. Because this project it is an experiment, we believe that it is necessary to keep always two points of view on the actions



that we were developing. Working this way, we managed to improve the analysis of the different situations that came up.

On the other hand, the group of young people also valued positively that a majority of the professional team in the school participated in the mission by bringing ideas for improvement.

The young people valued positively that the profile of the educators is calm, friendly, letting them have their space and at the same time knowing how to motivate the mission team when the mood was down. Young people have said that they see a big difference with the relationship that they had in the formal school. Now they feel more valued and a sense of being listened to. This has been the foundation to feel good and to participate in the project.

The mentality of Cancuní educators has changed considerably and increased the willingness of professionals to test innovative methodological proposals.

ENGAGING WITH YOUTH AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The educators decided that to start every “session” of the mission we would create a routine; this routine has been to go out and have breakfast together. This meant starting the day in a relaxing way and slowly introducing the issues that we decided to work on during the previous session. Keeping this routine and afterwards doing the different activities of the day has been very useful. We have been very respectful with the mood of the participants, understanding that some days they would not come along or they would not feel like participating too much. Young people have valued very positively this way of working together and the result has been that they have not felt pressed, even though we were asking for their commitment.

Since the very beginning, they saw the need to create a WhatsApp group, youth together with educators. This has generated more agility on the communication and a sense of belonging to the group.



WORKING WITH THE MISSIONS

It was not easy to establish the mission. The first step was for us, the educators, to understand what a mission was in the project. Afterwards it was easier to explain it to the youth. We needed several sessions in order to have the youth choose the mission. Each participant had different motivations, we needed to find a common point and we needed to take into account the five Didactics.

Several proposals came around and they were changing as we kept developing the project implementation. As we were working on the mission definition, we saw the ideas getting clearer. During this process, very varied ideas arose that were developed with different intensities:

- The generation of a business maker that sells onions (market garden) called "Cebalot" in which young people get in touch with the world of entrepreneurship. In this experience, the youngsters proposed making a production of onions for a food bank and they carried it out.



- The Keel, an experience in which young people were in contact with the world of sailboats.



- The sale of roses for the Sant Jordi festival (with this experience one of our students discovered their commercial vocation. This young man could not do it before because nobody trusted that he was able to manage money independently). This experience was proposed by young people in order to get money to carry out the Gym project.



- The Gym. The initial idea was to build a gym. There was some discussion because we educators thought that it would be a good initiative for the community but the young people wanted to build it in Cancuní. Finally the youngsters built some bars to do "workout" in the patio of Cancuní. They managed to agree on how to do it but later we looked for another mission since it did not participate in the community.



Some of the young people in the project participated in practices in real companies, as part of the project that is being developed in Cancuní. What was interesting in these cases was the transfer of knowledge between the practices and the "Open The Doors" project. These young people contributed a wider perspective to the project, and have put into practice some of the knowledge acquired in companies.

We would discard an idea and then a new one would come up. This was the process to get to the final mission: Create a better way to provide the city information for youth, from youth, to the youth.

We have reached the conclusion that together with the work on the mission we need to work individually with each teenager. Both approaches serve each other. We have understood that the personal development and the mission development go hand in hand. One of them cannot progress without the other. Therefore, we need to keep in mind the personal circumstances of each participant and use the project to have them go ahead. The youth development will be at a standstill if their personal momentum stops. The mission can be used to help young people move on.

The fact that young people have chosen their mission makes them more committed. At the same time, because they want things "immediately" we need to divide the mission in "sub-missions" that facilitate the visualization of objectives in short periods.



It has been easy to establish working alliances with the public authorities. The first reason was that we accompanied youth and this gave credibility to their proposals to the Municipality. The second reason is that Banyoles is a small town and therefore the contact with politicians is easier than in bigger cities. This generates an easier task and a closer relationship. In the same way, it is also less difficult to establish relationships with other agents in the area. The mission group has not thought to establish relationships with other agents outside the city for the moment. Therefore, our opinion regarding this point relates to experience with the earlier groups.



PERSPECTIVES – OPPORTUNITIES

We proposed to the teenagers to continue in the project after the school year is over; two of them do not want to continue, two more will think about this and the last one showed indifference to the idea.

Since we established the mission, we have been insisting that the youngsters look at this project as an opportunity for their future. We explained that if they would take the idea seriously, the Municipality might like the idea and consider paying in order to implement it.



The group demonstrated a lot of interest at the beginning but their motivation started fluctuating and it was difficult for them to see an opportunity of work. We realize once more the “right now- immediate” feeling they live in. The option of a “future” is far away and often they limit themselves and consider the possibility as unachievable, even though they have not even started. In spite of this, we understand this process as part of the learning they will be doing during their lives. We believe that the project Open The Doors has had a “before” and an “afterwards” effect in their way of understanding learning and in fact, that is what they have told us.

The roles in the project were distributed among the young people. For instance, one of the young people became the manager of the Instagram site (@totjoves). He sent the information published for young people to the Office of Youth in Banyoles. The mission group offered our project to the Office of Youth Banyoles. The Office of Youth think that the initiative has potential and are planning to support the young people in continuing with it. Our young people realised their potential in communication skills and wish to continue with the mission. Some of our young people who were not directly involved in the mission were inspired to become more involved.

Other young people in the city have already shown interest in this initiative.

We think that it would be good for them to develop several missions during their scholar time. It would be useful to deepen the methodology of trying and making mistakes so that they gain confidence and capacity to solve the new situations. To conclude, we think that in order to evaluate the impact of the project on youth we need at least 2 years. We think this is the amount of time that youth need to see their experiences from a distance, and value the influence that this experience has had in their lives.

We want to highlight the great impact of the project from the spread we have done (see our report dissemination).



Annex A2: Matosinhos 2nd Chance School, Portugal

CONTEXT

The Second Chance School of Matosinhos works with disadvantaged young people with low or no qualifications, unemployed and at risk of social exclusion. The school tries to offer these young people a new chance of quality training suitable to their needs and interests. Many students are referred through “court support teams” for young offenders, and others come through social services, mainstream schools and in general word of mouth peer-to-peer information.



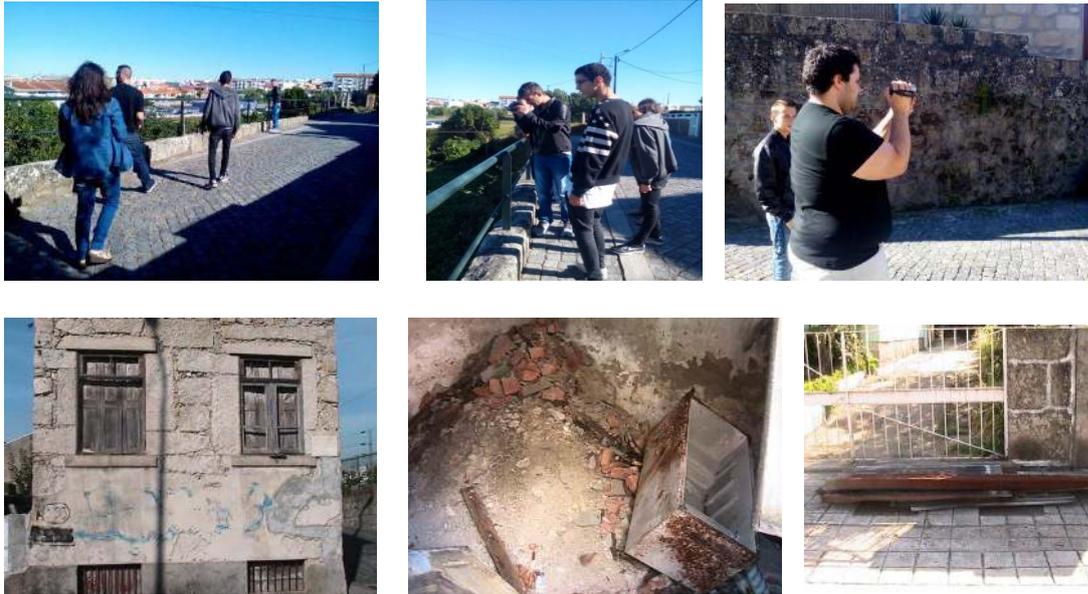
The student profile is extremely diverse. The majority have completed no more than four or six years of initial education. For many, their interests and talents lie in practical rather than academic skills. The school has 70 student places lasting one year, which can begin at any point in the year. Building up a portfolio of work leads to certification equivalent to the sixth or ninth year of school.

The school follows a holistic pedagogical approach through a “dynamic connection and combination between subjects”. The students develop their own Individual Training Plans, combining vocational, artistic, school and personal and social skills. Personal and social education is taught in a cross cutting way through different media, in response to issues that arise within a group, individual or family setting.

In January 2016, we gathered information from the kick off meeting in Girona and from the material available in Basecamp in order to understand what was expected from us in the project Open the Doors. We gave much emphasis to the didactics and to the concept of “mission”. We had frequent conversations among staff members as well as meetings and informal talks with the different groups of young people. Some of them entered the project and then left while others came and replaced them. It has been a long and not easy process to encourage youngsters to create something together and to stay within the project without giving up. As interests were different, we created various groups as part of experimenting with a mission – carpentry, arts, sewing and cooking. We had set up several partnerships with local schools, City Halls, social services, youth centres, musicians and graffiti artists, but there was still a need for more understanding of the Open the Doors initiative and the missions.

In September 2016, we had different youngsters at school and had to start over again. We decided to take a different approach, involving all the students of the school. Our option was to make several visits in the City Center and around the community to show all the youngsters that there were different areas where they could intervene and develop a mission. We made groups of four students and went outside the school with them.

One exercise that helped to focus on details was to take photographs of positive and negative things that they saw in the several places that they visited.



They also visited local institutions in order to understand the kind of public that they would prefer to work with, either elderly people or children.



The community is not only the people that live there, but also the environment that surrounds the people, and one thing that we **also** wanted to show to the youngsters was the possibility that they had to make it a better place. Through street art and painting, it is possible to create a new dimension on a place and actually give it a new life. Therefore, it was important to show them the interventions of the multiple artists that already made pieces of art in the community so that they could get some inspiration, because there is a difference between seeing a picture or to see a real thing.



We considered that environmental problems were also important and therefore decided to sensitize young people to the problem of deforestation and to a project of **tree seeds planting**. We went to Chrystal Palace in Porto. The mentor of this project talked with the students about it and about the possibility of some students joining it through the school. This could be one of the missions of the "Open the Doors" project if some students wanted to participate in it.



After this period of visits to places and institutions, we held a meeting with all the youngsters. We explained briefly, what the project was about and asked about their interests and talents. We asked if any of them would like to join the project and some showed interest in it.



We took a photo with this group of youngsters but after some time we realized that the group would undergo many changes.



The main challenge was to fix the membership. From the very beginning, we noticed that this was quite impossible. One day some youngsters said they wanted to take part, the other day they changed their minds. The solution we found was to keep the group open to those who wanted to join. Two or three youngsters were always there and constituted the basis of the team while the others came and went.

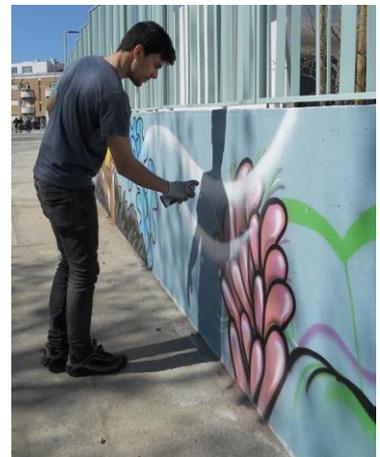
Another challenge was to meet their interests. As in the first year, they liked to do different things, so we had to let them develop different missions. Some liked to interact with children, others with elderly people. Other youngsters preferred urban art or had environmental concerns. Some of them liked a bit of everything. Therefore, we built an open team with mixed interests and different missions.

In the two years of the project, we tried to have only group work, but then we realized that we had youngsters that preferred to work individually. Therefore, we gave them the possibility to develop their own missions. In terms of individual work, we had three boys with a lot of potential and we considered that the project could be a great opportunity for them to build capacity and become aware of their talents and skills. The main challenge in this case was to achieve that they maintain their focus in their objectives, that they carried out their projects until the end and when they reached the "end", they could think of new applications to their initial project in order to develop it. This was the main difficulty. One of the boys finished his project "Game of Joy", but then he didn't want to develop it into a mobile application, as suggested by Steve in the Glasgow meeting. We had to respect his will.

In the course of the project, we saw that the youngsters' interests might change. We noticed, for instance, that in the beginning, some of them were reticent to work with elderly people, but others invited them to join. Then they discovered they liked this interaction very much. Now, when they go to the center of elderly people, they feel very happy and grateful for the opportunity of being with them. The contact with different situations and different generations helped them to discover new interests and attributes they didn't know they had.

YOUTH WORKER MINDSET

The youth worker accompanies the group in the different missions. Usually there are two youth workers accompanying the teams, but sometimes other educators also accompany the teams in the missions. We cannot say that with the project there was a radical change from the educator role to the facilitator role or to the broker role, because the school has always had that philosophy. Along the years, we have learned that the approach to dropout students has to be different from the one adapted in mainstream schools. We promote empathy and a family environment, under the motto "First connect then correct". This project helped us to see this is the right direction and to deepen this kind of relationship with the students. The youth worker has to be the facilitator, the close friend, the one that calls every day to the youngster asking if he doesn't come to school, asking if he/she is with any problem and needs help. The youth worker always tells the youngster that his/ her presence is needed at school and that his/her contribute to the missions is very important. The most important thing is not that they come on time, but that they come to the school. Therefore, instead of a punishment, the youth worker tells that he is happy to see them and that their help is much needed. At the Second Chance School of Matosinhos, the youth worker gradually understands that he has to adjust to the youngsters. It's no use rowing with them because of their lateness, idleness or poor behavior. The students are as they are and he has to accept that changing their attitudes is a slow process. His job is to facilitate that process. The youth worker has also to give the example and to take the role of a leader. The youngsters like to make suggestions and present their ideas but need someone that orientates them and show them how to do the things (for instance, how to make a graffiti).



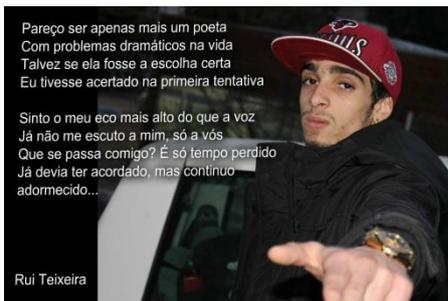
In short, this is the professional profile of a youth worker:

- Dialogues with the students and is attentive to their needs, talents and interests
- Promotes their creativity and empowerment
- Makes them believe in themselves and helps them to build capacity
- Is an example to the others: he paints with them, sings with them, acts with them and so on
- Documents all the activities and involves the youth teams in such documenting
- Together with the young people, he creates or drafts possible missions and then develops with them those projects

A youth worker works many hours with the youth. The number of hours depends on the mission. In the mission that involves working with elderly people, the sessions have to be planned, materials prepared and then there's the visit to the institution. In the mission of urban art (painting of a mural), many more hours are needed. There is a first step when the project is imagined and designed. Then the wall or mural has to be painted and the youth worker, together with the youth spends many full days doing it.

ENGAGING WITH YOUTH AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

As we said before, the Second Chance School of Matosinhos works with disadvantaged young people at risk of social exclusion. Some even reject the idea of being inside a classroom within a group. If we succeed in involving them in an individual project or mission, that can make a difference in their lives. Therefore, we try to go that way when they don't want to work in groups. In the first year, we had Rui Teixeira, a young boy who sang hip-hop and wrote his own lyrics. We took him to a professional studio where he had the possibility to record his songs. We also gave him the possibility to participate in public events and sing live. In the beginning, he was very shy and was afraid of being in a stage, but then he gained confidence in himself.



In the second year, we had two individual examples of youngsters who developed individual projects:



Vasco Aguiar is an 18-year-old boy who dropped out of school, because it meant nothing to him. He prefers to wander the streets instead of being inside the classroom.





However, he is a very talented boy: he sings, dances and makes amazing drawings. So, one day we asked if he didn't want to create a project of his own and he accepted the challenge. He illustrated emotions and made the Game of Joy. During the process of creation, his presence in the school was very high, which shows that he was motivated and that the fact of having a specific task and goal, helped him to find something interesting in coming to school. At the same time, he discovered that he could do something with his talents.



Filipe Monteiro is 22 years old and belongs to a Roma family. He left school when he was seventeen. His sister convinced him to come back to school. He came, but he had a very low self-esteem. In the beginning of the school year, he said he was good at nothing. In the carpentry workshop, he discovered an interest in woodworking. However, he didn't have a specific kind of work. He had a lot of sensibility for very small works, so the youth worker decided to create a toy club. This contributed to a higher presence of this youngster in the school. He produced many wood toys.

To motivate the youngsters and show them evidence of the missions they are developing, we created a page on Facebook. They follow it daily with great interest and feel proud of being part of the project.

WORKING WITH THE MISSIONS

In the first year of the project, we had four Open the Doors teams linked to the four vocational areas of the school. The Carpentry team had three missions: a) Open your Door. This was a mission directed to elderly people. The aim was to knock on their doors and see if they needed furniture restoration and minor works. Besides that, the team also befriended older persons and helped them with the delivering of information and advice, b) Recycling & Reusing. This was an entrepreneurial mission. The Open the Doors team aimed to produce sound systems and sound speakers as well as installing bikes with a motor; c) solidarity with students in need. The aim was to help the mates with more difficulties, performing repairs, paintings and minor works.



The Arts team developed two missions: a) Urban art. The City Hall of Matosinhos invited one group to paint with graffiti the wall around the new basic school of Matosinhos. The school invited three professional graffiti artists who, together with the Open the Doors team, developed the project. After making the project, the youngsters together with the three graffiti artists began to paint the mural. Pupils from the basic school of Matosinhos were invited to participate in the paintings. It was a collective work. b) Media productions and video. Some youngsters, mainly Rui Teixeira recorded his own songs in a professional studio and performed live in some public events.



The Sewing team developed two missions: a) Help local institutions such as kindergartens by supplying clothes, accessories and cloth toys for babies; b) Organize a Street Market, where they could sell different sorts of clothes and accessories made in the sewing workshop.



The cooking team had a lot of ideas, but developed only two missions: a) selling their own recipes at the bar of the school; b) selling their own recipes at the street market.



In the second year of the project, working with the missions was a bit different. The teams were not linked to their vocational areas, but were divided according to their interests, which could be included in three different fields: social, artistic and environmental.

In the several meetings we had with the young people, some youngsters showed interest in developing missions with different generations: young children and elderly people. Others wanted a mission connected with urban art and others showed environmental concerns. So, within the team we decided to develop different missions. Some youngsters wanted to participate in only one mission while others wanted to participate in more than one. The team was open and so were the missions.

The challenge was to engage them in a project so that they could build capacity. In the beginning, some participated only for curiosity, but then they understood that the missions could be rewarding for them. The main difficulty was to assure their commitment. Sometimes we planned visits or activities and some youngsters didn't appear as agreed. They gave us an excuse: "Sorry, it wasn't possible to come, I will participate next time". We never closed the door for them, encouraging them to come next time.

In the two years, we had no problems with partnerships with local institutions or public authorities. We always accompanied the youth and they were always open to receive us. In terms of financial support, the city hall was always open to our needs.

Now, we will make a short description of the missions developed in the second year:

Mission 1 - Intergenerational learning in informal contexts

In this mission, we continued the intergenerational relationship with elderly people begun in the first year of the project. This time, we developed the project with a center for elderly people (CATI), which is one of our local partners. The mission tried to promote active ageing, both in socio-psychological and physical terms. It also aimed to promote intergenerational solidarity, the development of values such as respect and collaboration and an important way of learning in an informal context.

Our youngsters went five times to CATI and the older people came twice to our school. This interrelationship involved practical activities as well as listening to the life stories of the elderly and talking with them about different ways of facing life, different values of the present and past, the conceptions that each generation has in relation to other generations. They came to our school in January to sing traditional songs to our students and they participated in our performance in the end of the school year with a story and some songs. They were very happy to feel that their contribution was important to the youngsters. With this mission, young people saw that they had a lot to learn with this intergenerational sharing. The elderly told us that this sharing contributed to a more positive trend in the conceptions they had with regard to young people.



We also included primary schools and kindergartens in this mission, because we had youngsters that wanted to develop projects with little children. They felt very well assuming themselves as role models. They planned activities and it was their task to teach the children how to do something, for instance make a snowman with a sock and sand or a witch with a plastic spoon and a napkin. They behaved very well in front of the children, and the primary teachers that had already been teachers of some of our students had difficulty in recognizing them. This gave them a sense of pride and increased their self-esteem. It was very important for them to come back to their former school and give a positive image of themselves.

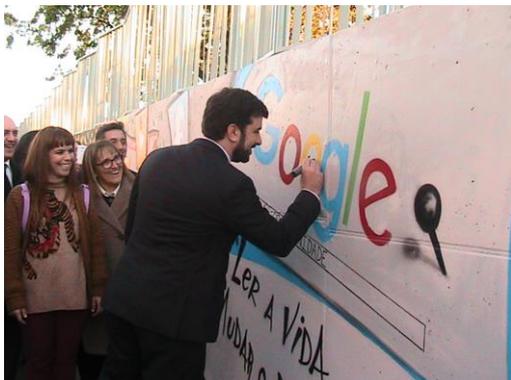


Mission 2 – Urban Art

In this mission, we continued the project of the first year of painting with graffiti the wall around the new basic school of Matosinhos. In the second year of the project, the team finished the painting and added some sentences related to education that could be written on the same wall:



On the 23rd November 2016 it was the opening of the Primary School of Estádio do Mar with the presence of the Minister of Education who congratulated ESOM (Second Chance School of Matosinhos) for this great project.



The aim of this mission was not only to improve the look of some urban areas, making them fun places to live and play, but also to deepen the collaboration and relationship with the community. There was also the goal of empowering the youngsters, who have low qualifications and a low self-esteem. This mission helped them to explore their

talents and build capacity. It was also a way to show society that these youngsters have a lot to give.

After finishing this mission, the Open the Doors team didn't want to stop. They wanted more projects, so they decided to make a flier presenting their work to the community and offering their services. In the flier, the students wrote, "We have the talents to transform the city. Let's do it together!"



A **ESOM** constitui uma resposta adequada de educação de segunda oportunidade a um problema claramente identificado - os jovens que abandonam a escola sem terem obtido as qualificações mínimas adequadas para aceder a um emprego ou a novos percursos de formação e, a maior parte das vezes, sem possuírem competências sociais básicas que lhes permitam uma adequada integração social e ocupacional.

Temos os **talentos** para transformar a cidade.
Estamos abertos a projetos colaborativos!

Morada: Largo da Capela do Telheiro,
4465-053, S. Mamede de Infesta

Email: geral@segundaoportunidade.com

Telefone: 22 906 45 38

Fotografias:
Escola EB 1 Estádio do Mar, Matosinhos
Escola de Segunda Oportunidade de Matosinhos

The City Hall of S. Mamede de Infesta welcomed this initiative and suggested four walls in the community to be painted by our school. They offered to support all the expenses with the paintings. The youth group visited the first wall to be painted and took pictures:



Then, they planned what they were going to paint on that wall.





So the project to bring art to the community goes on...

Mission 3 – Agrischool

In this new mission, the initial aim was to develop a project of tree seeds planting. It was a mission based on the environmental concern of deforestation. Every year many trees are burned in the summer fires and the youngsters thought they could collect seeds, plant them, wait till trees grew and then re-plant them. This way they would contribute to reforestation. There was a first meeting at Chrystal Palace in Porto where this idea was discussed.



However, after some time this idea was abandoned because it would take a long time to fulfill the mission.

The OtD team decided instead to draw a mandala garden to cultivate afterwards. First they made the drawing:



And then began to cultivate it:



Let's see next year what are the results.

Individual Missions

Besides these group missions, we had three individual missions as already referred before in the section "Engaging with youth at risk of social exclusion".

Integrating all the missions in one activity

To integrate all the individual and group missions, the school promoted a performance where the final goal was to connect all the community partners with the youngsters and the youth workers. People of all ages contributed to this event. We had our partners from CATI participating with songs and a reading moment and we had children from a dance academy dancing ballet. This performance was composed of dancing, acting and music that lasted one hour and thirty minutes.



All of the costumes, scenarios and props were made at school by the youngsters together with the youth workers to promote not only a total involvement but to create a feeling of responsibility. Not every youngster was ready to go on the stage, so this way, they were also involved and they were able to give their contribution. The moment on the stage is not the only important thing, but all the process behind the curtains.

Another important thing in this performance was that everyone got together with a common goal, and this promoted teamwork and feelings of belonging that helped the youngsters to be motivated and to have a reason to come to the school. It is notorious that in the final days of the preparation for the performance, everyone got more excited and they started to ask for a role or to do something to help. This performance was also a result of an interdisciplinary work. All the subjects such as Arts, Mathematics, History, Sciences, Portuguese and English language tried to find a place where they could enter and give their contribution. This helped to make knowledge a little bit more interesting and easy to learn.

This performance is a brake on the common image that these youngsters have in the society. They are underestimated and with this, they have something to show to the community. They are not losers. They are able to learn, to focus and to make a piece of art that gets the recognition of everyone and most of all, they get more confident and this helps with their self-esteem. Arts are really important when working with youngsters at risk of social exclusion, because they are exposed to different and positive experiences that can help them to express, to know themselves and to know inner talents that they didn't know they had before.



PERSPECTIVES – OPPORTUNITIES

The youngsters that belong to the project will continue in the school next year, because they are attending a course that lasts two years. The idea is to continue with the missions and the didactics, because the school identifies itself with the philosophy of the project.



Project of Urban Art

This is an example of a project that will continue. In 2016, we got financial support from the City Hall of Matosinhos to paint the wall of the new Primary School of Matosinhos. This was a great project and even the Minister of Education congratulated our school for it.

We have now a new project, to paint a mural in a street of S. Mamede de Infesta. We have the financial support of the City Hall of S. Mamede to cover all the expenses. The youngsters believe that they have the talents to transform the city into a more pleasant place to live.

The missions related to intergenerational learning in informal contexts are also very important to maintain. The different generations have a lot to learn with this sharing of experiences and knowledge. The work with the community will always be an important part of our school. The agrischool project will also go on. Next year we will see the results of what was planted. Next year, we hope to maintain the same staff, namely two youth workers and they will give continuity to the missions.

After two years of the project, we feel that we have a closer relationship with our local partners and the school has gained more recognition of its work. This has led to a great visibility in the media: two articles published on national newspapers and two television reports.



https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/unica-escola-do-pais-que-da-segunda-oportunidade-fica-em-matosinhos_v1003079

Our director, Luís Mesquita, also published two articles in JN, a very important newspaper in Portugal:



<http://www.jn.pt/opiniao/convidados/interior/a-reducao-do-abandono-escolar-8514211.html>

<http://www.jn.pt/opiniao/convidados/interior/uma-segunda-oportunidade-8556507.html>

On June 27, the Second Chance School was born as a new modality of the Portuguese educational system. We think that the visibility we gained with the Open the Doors Project contributed a great deal to it. We hope this recognition will open the doors to a different way of being in education in Portugal.

We also think the project had considerable impact in our young people. They will end the school year with a different look on themselves and on the others. Through the project, we helped them to build capacity and discover their inner talents. We also helped them to understand that the relationship with different generations can be very rewarding. The challenge for the future is to deepen even more our work with the community. We feel that our young people has also to be more committed with the projects and missions in which they become involved.

Finally, the project has contributed to a changing of mentality in the mindset of youth workers and teachers in general. They understood that they need a different approach to reach youth at risk of social exclusion. Concepts as acceptance, patience, understanding, empathy and love are very important when working with these members of society. More than teachers, they are facilitators and brokers. That's the big challenge.

Annex A3: School No5, Piatra Neamt, Romania

CONTEXT

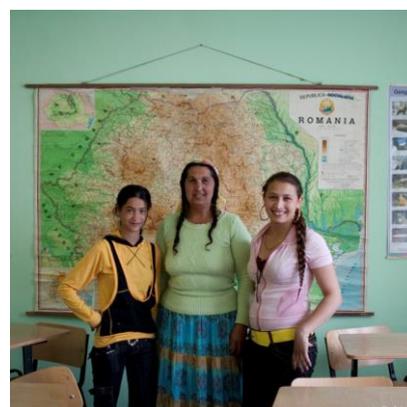


Second Chance in Romania, Gymnasium School Nr5, Piatra Neamt, started in October 2008, when the school expected a lot of girls and boys from the Roma minority. Despite the expectation, we had less than 20 persons from Roma people, but more than 40 NEET youth that had dropped out of compulsory education. We used to have a promotional campaign for

the second Chance programme in our school, every year in September, involving mass media, local TV, word of mouth and flyers in order to attract those people who left the school earlier.

Until September 2015, we used to teach the target group through special curricula, using traditional pedagogy, inside the school, with our didactic materials and with trained teachers on working with disadvantaged students. The students were eager to receive the graduation certificates, but regrettably the return and adaptation with school rigors was difficult for most of them. Communication between students and teachers was slow, the students were always asking for money for transport, clothing and food.

Our work begins every October with 2-3 weeks of gaining the trust of students, talking a lot with each of them, or in small groups and using a psychological tool (Maslow Pyramid of needs, drawings trees and family members) in order to find the level of required competences (special skills, talents or cognitive functions), their backgrounds and their needs. After 4 weeks they usually accept to talk about their past, the causes of the early leaving school and about the NEET 'life. Every year at the end of October, we ask them to write a short story about their life before and their expectations or dreams at the end of



Second Chance courses. "The story of my life", therefore, became a tool for knowing our students:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=Y1hX3mdl6Ew



YOUTH WORKER MINDSET

Not every teacher from the School Nr.5 succeeded to change the traditional pedagogy into a new approach of the curricula. The individual approach of learners, the transfer of knowledge accompanied by career and life counselling is a demanding activity. Thus, there were teachers from School Nr.5 who no longer wanted to work with the second chance students because the 'tangible' results are missing. The real challenge was to create new capacity building among teachers to ensure the continuation of the mission. The manager and the teachers from "Dimitrie Leonida" Collegium, our traditional, took the Second chance students and attended the Girona seminar, in order to understand the benefits of the missions and the objectives of Open the Doors,



in daily work with NEET (the minimum information for an effective intervention at both, social and professional levels). The teachers had to build the capacity of trust in students' abilities to change, even if doctors and family members labeled them as disabled. The students can recover, growing spectacularly, or they can collapse, under the indifference of the society. The teacher has to play the role of a mentor, facilitator, coaches, broker, sister or brother, mother, psychologist or priest for confession.



WORKING WITH YOUTH AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The Roma people have their own rules, so we had to ensure the safety of every student in school because the relationship between women and men does not admit the idea of gender equality. We also face the lack of communication between students and teachers, as not every teacher accepted to work with this kind of students. Other challenges were students` family and social background – poverty, mono-parental families, delinquency, and, also, students` low civic and social competences and skills. Therefore, we work every year with NEET young, Roma people, unemployed persons receiving social aids or with persons coming from prison, between 35-55 persons in two classes. Our main challenge is to find the best approach to maintain the students at second Chance Programme. Our job is to discover their skills and to help them choose the future domains of activity from Gastronomy, Textiles, Mechanics or Science of Nature.

We succeeded to overpass the barrier of students` behaviour and attitudes by training teachers for a different approach of teaching. We applied for some social projects in order to help students attend the classes, so the community could find out about our second Chance programme, about our needs. We enrolled our school in the European Network of E2C, in order to receive the European Community support for working through strategic or educational projects.



We involved the students in extracurricular activities like job fairs, cultural performances, handmade souvenirs, and so on, in order to meet their native skills, develop the creativity and spirit of the initiative.

After a few years of the second Chance programme we obtained some wonderful results working with youth at risk of social exclusion that motivated us to continue:

- We guided almost 75% of the enrolled students to find a job;
- More than 10% of all our students attended the day and evening courses of the technical high secondary school at Technical Lyceum "Dimitrie Leonida", our traditional partner for the 2nd Chance programme
- Two students every year pass the Bacalaureate Exam and apply for a University place.
- Many other prizes for the students' participations at County Olympics for different crafts, or local contests on cultural skills, art performances and gastronomy design.

WORKING WITH THE MISSIONS



We had a difficult task in building the capacity of the teachers, in the matter of understanding the characteristics of our students. They had to rethink how to introduce their subjects, how to find the best approach in order to enrich results with low skilled students. They had to become more creative, flexible, aware of real students' needs, and most of all, able to build a bridge between the students and the realities of life, through outdoors activities. The teachers understood they

had to change their approach, to go outside of the box and meet their students with their problems, failures, fear or shame, but also with untapped talents or hidden skills.

After the "Open the Doors" project began, we focused on the mission and objectives of the project and we started building the teachers' capacity of finding and using different approaches to communicate and teach, connecting their subjects to the real life. The idea of the project is that teachers and community have confidence in youth's capacity of developing intellectual, creative and practical skills. In addition, we looked for resources to provide a friendlier environment, to reduce the distance between teachers and students, challenging students and teachers to face working in a real life situation. Now we are meeting students in the town, giving them a reflexion task about

what they would like to change, about how they see their own future, looking also to their skills, physical and emotional possibilities.



In our free time, the headmaster, some teachers and we ran for sponsorship and help at the local authorities, non-profit associations, churches. Soon, we received clothes, personal hygiene products, snacks and sandwiches. The communication has improved and our students trust the New School.

We ran Counselling classes where we tried to know the background of each student, focussing on their personal needs, but they wouldn't accept to talk about their needs. Then, we tried to gain their trust by challenging them to discuss the elements of Maslow's pyramid.

We ran Counselling classes where we tried to know the background of each

Next, we asked them to write a short story about the causes of their failure, what they did after leaving school, and why they returned to the second Chance programme. This instrument of knowing each other is called **"The story of my life"** and it revealed so huge surprises: we discovered that they had had negative experiences that had left deep marks on their personalities and feelings.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=Y1hX3mdl6Ew

We also found out how the students see the teachers from the second Chance programme.

See the link from School Nr 5: <http://otd.scoala5piatraneamt.ro>. "The story of my life" was the tool that showed us the necessity of changing of management of the second Chance programme, to find the suitable approach for every topic to teach and to make our classes more flexible, through outdoors activities, and thus more emotionally attractive.



PERSPECTIVES – OPPORTUNITIES



Our work with NEET, through the mission of Open the Doors project, created sustainable outcomes that were taken over by the "Dimitrie Leonida" Technical College, at the point where they took responsibility for the Second Chance classes together with the mainstream students, procedures and pedagogical approaches. The main opportunity of the project was that it produced positive changes on individual and collective levels, for both, students and teachers or social workers. The new school already has the recipe or the "know how", of how to turn a school dropout into a success story, for NEET youth. The teachers from the Second Chance School have to adapt their pedagogy to each new young person who lost the route, to give him or her confidence in his or her own strength, basic knowledge and competences. Teachers work with students to help them choose or design their future, and then, to let them fly! They will face the real life and find the best personal route.

As a result of our learning through the debates during the project "Open the Doors", the teachers will be trained to come closer to students, becoming their brokers, mentors, coaches, and facilitators, working as a team. The students will benefit from lessons out of the door, they will be challenged to make decisions in real life situations, to meet real models, entrepreneurs, and to reach and use real machines and IT equipment in order to discover their skills.



The great opportunity for young NEET in Romania will be the continuation of funding by the Ministry of Education of the Second Chance Programme, in order to give the students basic competences for life. A good opportunity for both, students and teachers would be to continue applying for Erasmus+ projects, like school partnership projects with similar schools, or strategic partnership.



Therefore, we recommend:

- Working with European projects (Erasmus+) in order to keep the standards, receive financial support, and share our practice experiences.
- Organizing training sessions for teachers on Second chance subjects would be a good opportunity for all teachers working with low skilled students, not only for those that are working with NEET.



Annex A4: Kontiki, Budapest, Hungary



CONTEXT

Our second chance school is for drop out and early school leaver children, with different and difficult social and family backgrounds. Some of the students have learning difficulties, including psychological or behavioural problems.



YOUTH WORKER MINDSET

A colleague had difficulties with getting good connection to her students. She decided to keep very friendly contact but she could not distinguish a good connection to a too close one. In her group were some girls who she dealt with in very strange ways. Much of the time, she touched and hugged them, talked them about her private life and she thought she was very successful to “reach” those students. The girls called her “Mom”!

Of course, those girls also had different kinds of problems as most students have. Therefore, in a short time it turned out that they looked at our colleague as their mother so, like many teenagers, they did not want to keep any rules or agreements. They wanted to do things against their "Mother". Our colleague started to have many problems with them and could not work efficiently day by day. At last, they reached that point when the girls called her "bloody bitch" instead of Mother.



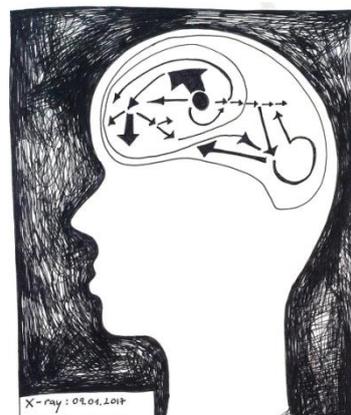
Teachers and parents have quite different relationships with the youngsters. Having friendly and good connections, we teachers do not need to be too close without any control. Putting some border and keeping some healthy space between students and teachers give the students a necessary support, which they can lean against when they need. To be open, tolerant, friendly, and individually equal does not mean that we should be best friends with the students the same way as

they make friends among their own age group. In Open the Doors, our main role with the young people became that of broker so that relationships grew through working with the missions.

As the example above shows, in the beginning of the project we had difficulties with some of our teachers. The reason was that most teachers worked in regular schools before and hardly met those problems that we have every day. It was problematic for them to find the best method to approach our students.

To support the adults, we decided to hold lectures in pairs, so the colleagues with longer experiences and practice could show good examples to the newcomers. We also encouraged them to take part in special workshops about alternative techniques and methods giving them opportunity to have self-experiences as well. In this process, they could lose their preconceptions about being too friendly or sometimes too rigid, but learned to accept the students' specialities, and began to build on their values as a starting point.

Nowadays most of our colleagues have changed in their mindset. Besides being supportive and open, we understand that we all have to be very flexible. Our work requires us to be in the "here and now". There is always an unexpected happening or problem connected with the youngsters so we need to use the prompt situations or issues as the basic point. It needs a creative and alert thinking, mindful and conscious approach. It is a new change in our mindset that everything can be a tool for learning and developing. It can reflect to real life as we all have many unexpected things with which



we have to deal. Those teachers who came from regular schools have some change in their communications, too, because in our school the directing tone with this kind of youngster is not efficient at all. The communication of partnership is important in our school- “we can do it together” instead of “you have to do it”. It shows that “we are in partnership and if you have any barriers, I will be besides you, everybody can make mistakes, we can solve the problems together”.

Our slogan is that “we do not need to teach but behave properly”. It means that we teach by setting examples ourselves. We are brave to show our weaknesses as well and we do not act as if we were omnipotent but the same human being as our students are.

ENGAGING WITH YOUTH AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION



We have a special Inclusion Programme at our school. The programme lasts six weeks and aims to re-socialise young people who have dropped out of regular education. Typically, they have different kinds of problems like drugs or criminal problems. They have harmful social backgrounds.

To motivate the students and them keep in the programme we recognised that it was not enough to call them into school and class but we had to offer them programmes in which they could be interested. As the youngsters had passive resistance with anything bidden by adults, we

decided to plan a project together with them. So we asked them about their interests, had talks about their life, thoughts, wishes. At last, it turned out that most of them like sports, so they suggested a project about it. The project name was BSC (Befogadó Sport Club), Inclusion Sport Club.

Then we were talking about roles. One young boy undertook the status of the director and a young girl the status of the secretary of the Club. Talks by talks we had the following roles: organizer, web site designers as IT experts, cook, graphic artist, and tourist guides. After brainstorming, together we planned how to build this “business”. All jobs had its own tasks and they worked in pairs or small groups. The original idea made them excited as well as the entire process. It was great to see how they could mobilize their activity, as they felt the project their own creation. Gradually, there were many successful moments and they created visible products as well like web site design, text for introduction of the Club, programme offers, menu for the Club’s restaurant, and so on.



An extra advantage was that meanwhile they had fun in accomplishing their tasks. We pointed out to them that this process was itself a study. They could get marks as well in certain subjects. As we have changed last year our teaching methods at school and started to work in missions, this Inclusion Program prepares very well the youngsters to join our system easier.



Annex A5: EDUCA, Prague, Czech Republic

CONTEXT

Educa International, o.p.s. is the only organization in the Czech Republic who is a member of the E2C – the European Association of Cities, Institutions and Second Chance Schools. Educa was founded in 2007 as a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) for support of the educational and professional skills of young people (students, graduates and dropouts).

The main aim of Educa was to prove the possibility of having a Second Chance School in the Czech Republic. In general, the Second Chance School programme is aimed at young unemployed individuals between the age of 15-26 years who are partially or totally without access to training schemes or employment, because they became school dropouts. The goal of Second Chance School is not to satisfy a need for labour or studies, but to provide each individual student with the opportunity to develop his/her own potential and talent, because Second Chance School concepts stress an informal learning focus on promotion of self-confidence and social or professional competence.

Second Chance Schools are present in the Czech Republic on a theoretical level. So far, there is still no real school of this type in the Czech Republic, although the European pilot project was completed in EU countries in 2000 and later Educa realized a similar project in the Czech Republic based on its result (2012-2015). This model for the training of young people without qualifications was approved as an appropriate manner for the support and enhancing of practical skills of young people without prior professional qualification for their success in practice. All training activities are realized as private actions without state or regional institutions. Currently Educa has completed professional training for more than 50 young people without primary education, and everyone has gained work because of their practical knowledge, regardless of the fact that Educa does not offer accredited courses. These young people get the opportunity to work, and this is the most important thing. These results should motivate other institutions and vocational schools in the regions to educate young people in this form of preparation.

The second chance schools programme could be implemented in every major city in the Czech Republic. They could be organized through the system of vocational schools and special schools. Sometimes we hear the argument that schools are accessible to all and it is the right of everybody to use them and if some individuals do not want to attend school, it is his/her choice and the education system cannot force anyone if he/she leaves the school before graduation or does not continue after completing compulsory education. However, it is a big mistake. Young people are leaving schools before graduation, not through poor attainment but because the school system is

based on theoretical study and not everybody is born for it. In our experience, students are often very good in practical ways and our project results confirm it.

It is not acceptable to claim that everyone has the opportunity to learn and if he/she does not, that is his/her problem. On the one hand, it is a problem of the youthful, but every individual is a part of society, and the society has to help him/her to take an active part in it. We must ensure that these young people without qualifications are not just consumers of social benefits but are contributors to the state budget. To do this, however, they need certain professional habits and skills to get a job and have an income. It is a way to extricate them from social dependence and become active members of society.

The investments in the training of young people for their future success in the job market is much cheaper than long-term provision of social benefits without any motivation for work. Each young person who did not complete his/her studies or did not continue professional education after the completion of elementary studies, is usually jobless and becomes a long-term financial burden for the society.

According to the Czech Statistical Office (2011), one year after leaving school before due completion, 39.3% of graduates of elementary schools do not have jobs (three months after leaving school, almost 70% of them do not have jobs). It is only 3.6% of university graduates after one year, and 14.5% of secondary school graduates. According to the statistics of the Labour Office (Statistical Year Book of the Labour Market in the Czech Republic for 2010), the unemployed with elementary education and without any education in the Czech Republic accounted for 26.3% of the total number of registered job applicants regardless their age.

YOUTH WORKER MINDSET



The role of the tutor is to advise and practically train the course attendant to master the activities defined for his/her in the training plan, as there is a list of tasks for each profession that the attendant should master. The tutor does not have the role of a critic; he/she is rather an advisor and assistant in his/her difficult situation not only in the professional training, but also in dealing with some of the personal problems. The tutor who is in day-to-day contact with him/her

and is usually the first person who finds out about personal problems of the course attendant and may help him/her deal with them.

In one instance, a youth worker identified Jane a youth who had been dealing with a traumatic experience. Once the youth worker reached out it was discovered that the youth had been dealing with trauma due to being verbally and physically abused by her partner. This particular youth was having difficulties in the class ranging from

anger, fighting, and being verbally aggressive towards classmates and the instructor. Upon further communication with the youth, it was identified that the youth had run away from the abusive relationship to live with a family member. Once the youth worker and the youth started to develop rapport, the youth began to speak about her self-harm and her inability to cope properly with difficulties. The youth stated an interest in Zumba and her dream of becoming a Zumba instructor. Due to her current situation, however, the youth did not have access to a facility. The youth worker proposed the idea of providing the youth with space in the school. This would allow the youth to have a place to practise and cope with some of the challenges by relieving stress. As a result, this allowed the youth to develop a healthy relationship with the youth worker, school staff, and her peers to gain a sense of belonging, and begin a healing process that would allow her to continue her studies.

ENGAGING WITH YOUTH AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Early on one of the first challenges identified was engagement. Traditional methods did not prove to be productive and this started a cultural shift in the approach and the way that engagement was carried out.

This was the case with "Michael" who early on learned about the opportunities that Educa offers. Among the first participants was Michal, a very intelligent young man at the age of 26, who, however, did not complete any training and was without qualifications and therefore without a job and for almost 10 years in the records of the Labour Office. He showed interest in the profession of electrician or mechanics of copy machines. We did not find a suitable trainer in the field of mechanics but were able to establish a relationship in the field of electrician with the UAAP Kladno.-Vrapice. After about two months of preparation, the youth sent a letter to Second Chance School, in which he wrote:

"Dear Second Chance School,

I have to start doing something. I have a lot of time to think about it. And the more I do, the more I expect. I do not want unreasonable claims, and I know that if you want something, you do not get it the next day. You must have life goals that motivate you in parallel. I was not happy with my old lifestyle and specifically with its structure. By realising this, I amplify the thick line that signals that I'm starting a new life. This requires good work. In order for a person to do a good job, they have to know something well. To tell the truth, I have been trying for a long time to improve and improve my world. The second chance school came at the right time and handed me a helping hand, and I'm glad to have plagued her. Thanks to this opportunity and Vrapice school, I have the opportunity to learn something in my 26 years in equipped workshops with the help of professional masters in the field of electrician.

I appreciate your company's commitment to this project and the fact that you also accepted the name School of Second Chance. For a man who has neglected a lot in his life, it is literally a life credo crossing the limits of transcendence. Thank you for your work and for everything you are trying to do for the young people. I firmly believe that I will seize this opportunity and School of Second Chance will be proud of me and also because it is one of the catalysts of the chance that is ahead of me. Thank you and the whole team of Second Chance School. I wish a lot of success.
Michal "

He was interested in the discipline, completed 3 months of training with a trainer in this school and asked us for a contribution towards a welding course as part of the project. After a few days, however, he stopped attending and announced a voluntary admission to hospital for longer treatment. At that moment, we were afraid he would not fulfill his promise. It happened, however, what no one expected - Michal returned from healing after half a year, took up the welding course and he successfully finished. At that time, he was 27 years old, holding not only the Second Chance Certificate, but he also became a real professional - a welder and immediately gained a job. Michal was able to get away from the past and really changed his life. Certainly, he was not the only one, but he did it. The School offers a second chance, but it clearly requires a strong will of the programme participant.



WORKING WITH THE MISSION

Michael and Jane's story are just two distinctive cases of the difficulties and challenges that youth face in the Czech Republic. While the obstacles range, with proper assistance and support evidence shows that if youth are given a second chance then they can succeed and become integrated members of society.

Several best approach methods that have yielded positive results when working with youth include:

- To be able to communicate with the Second Chance School student, understand his/her psychic and social problems and help in dealing with his/her problems
- To motivate the student in the specific profession in which he/she is trained and provide him/her with professional help and using an appropriate form to evaluate his/her shortcomings and primarily focus on emphasising positive results of work of a Second Chance School student

- Keep records of the student's presence and record each improvement, both in social behaviour and professional skills
- Help in overcoming difficulties
- Evaluate, together with the student, previous results of training and propose further steps for the development of new skills on an ongoing basis
- Be empathetic, consistent, and patient when working with youth
- Allow youth to know and understand your intentions
- Respect cultural differences and never label youth
- Praise youth for their accomplishments and encourage them
- Always try to have a positive attitude and not to pass bad temper onto students
- Develop a two way road of communication and not be an authoritarian figure
- Be genuine, supportive, and caring

PERSPECTIVES – OPPORTUNITIES

According to data from Eurostat (2011), there is currently a significant share of young people in all EU countries who do not get an adequate professional education. Eurostat states that this share in the Czech Republic ranges between 9.4% and 8.1% from 1990 to 2010. Eurostat defines the 'level of achieved education of young people' as the share of young people between 20 and 24 who complete at least secondary school education. Employers and society hold a high percentage of young people who did not complete professional education in low regard.

An early leaving of school is a problem of all social groups, however, not on the same level. It is not a socially neutral phenomenon. It affects certain social groups more than others. In certain cases, the problem is deeper and arises from insufficient social competences of young people – insufficient motivation in the family, financial problems of the family, race intolerance, bullying, consequently frequent drug or alcohol addiction and there may be a lot of other influences that make students leave the school before due completion of their studies. Surveys conducted in Europe show

that school dropouts¹ frequently come from low income families and it seems that early dropping out passes down from generation to generation. Many of these young people come from disrupted families and insufficiently integrated immigrant and refugee families. An early dropping out from school is consequently not an isolated phenomenon of failure at school. It relates to social exclusion, and to many social, health, family and financial factors. Failure at school is only one of the aspects of a more extensive domino effect of social deprivation. Early dropping out from school is frequently the obstacle, preventing young people from acquiring skills, professional qualifications, sense of duty and responsibility for their behaviour as well as social contacts and the environment necessary for them to be part of society and to be appreciated by society.

The lack of dealing with this problem on a national level may lead to a further increase in the number of young people without completed education in the Czech Republic and consequently a decrease in the possibilities of involvement on the job market (and European job market) in the following years. The Second Chance School's mission is to reduce the number of youth without employment or proper education. In order to continue to carry out this mission three long-term key areas of focus were identified; prevention, intervention and community capacity building

To reduce the future number of dropouts in the Czech Republic it is important that several initiatives be taken to address the ongoing concerns. These include:

- Identifying at risk youth and developing a relationship to address their problems before they drop out.
- Early intervention to support youth to return to school or obtain proper training within a field to gain the necessary skills that would permit them to secure a stable position in the workforce.
- With this being said it is still important that government support is established to ensure that youth obtain the necessary resources needed to become successful independent individuals in today's workforce.

¹ The "school dropouts" term is used in wide sociological sense and includes young people in any age who left school studies early without obtaining basic skills and qualifications.

Annex B: The Story of Open the Doors

Story of the Project implementation



Open the Doors has been a two-year project with a very ambitious programme aimed at implementing very innovative ways to develop entrepreneurship. We started the project with a delay of three months and a budget cut of around 38%. However, we scheduled the Kick-off Meeting in Girona (Spain) in January 2016 and that was our starting point. The main objective was to meet

all the partners and understand the core of the project...

Following the meeting, each partner returned home and began creating the missions of the project. This was not that easy, however. The Open the Doors project demanded a significant change of mentality and we realized that youth workers can resist doing things differently and we realized that it is not so easy to understand the essence of the project. We were stuck for some time. We did not know how to proceed. Teachers continued with old habits and it was difficult to do things differently and to create the first missions as envisaged, following the didactics of the project.



Our second Partner Meeting took place in Budapest (Hungary) in April 2016 and it showed us that each practice partner comes from a different reality, with its own starting point and possibilities. We acknowledge that some new ideas emerged. There were new interactions and interesting exchange of ideas between the partners but we still did not fully grasp the key points of the project. Although there was a degree of innovation, the new missions were still essentially a continuation of similar work that the partners did in the past. We needed to go further and create the capacity of generating initiatives with the young people, that is, the initiative *should not* come from the educators. We aimed at generating an entrepreneurial capacity within our young people and we realized that the very first step is to change the mentality of teachers, educators and youth workers.

But how?

An important milestone in the project was the first seminar of 5 days in Porto (Portugal) in September 2016. Working together for 5 days enabled us to intensify our relationship and really reach the core of the project. We spent many hours in dialogue and reflection and by the fourth day, we were able to generate a shift, a change of paradigm that opened the doors to the creation of new missions for the second year of the project.

The five didactics, that are the frame of the missions, were now clearly understood. By now, we were starting the second year of the project.



Back at our schools, we started with this new frame of mind and a key point was getting out of the school and going into the community. Slowly, teachers and youth workers started realizing that a change in our minds brought changes in the young peoples' minds. With this new emerging mentality, we could see how the missions as defined by the project could be created by the young people themselves!

We reflected on the fact that the project was designed with a certain rhythm but the reality of our young people is very complex and all partners we have experienced unexpected “delays” that could not be foreseen when the application was created. For example:

- The length of time needed to generate a new relationship of confidence with youth. Before creating a mission with them, youth workers needed to create a safe space for these young people; this takes time and it is quality time in which young people can slowly just be themselves and where there is a new relationship emerging between youth workers and youth.
- The lack of regularity in attending classes by these youth, which means that the mission is interrupted or cannot advance on a regular base.
- Another unexpected issue was the change of opinion from young people about being part or not in the mission.

In spite of this we realized that by following their own rhythm the “the missions” do have an effect on the young people. See their testimonials in our website.

We realize that we are here only because of all the effort and work that we did during the first year of the project, trying and not succeeding but persevering. A key factor in reaching this point has been the flexibility that practice partner schools have regarding the internal organization of their activities. It is important to acknowledge that the degree of flexibility in some countries is much wider than in others. Spain and Portugal have a great deal of flexibility, while Romania, Hungary and the Czech Republic are more constrained. This has a huge influence on the characteristics and results of the missions developed. This flexibility is a key point in the development of the entrepreneurial capacity building for NEET prevention.

Our third Partner meeting was in Glasgow (UK) in January 2017. Glasgow served to consolidate the work done up to that point. We reflected and exchanged experiences and ideas and set the next steps. We were proud to acknowledge that we changed mentality and this generates the change in youth and is the main contribution to have youth develop an entrepreneurial attitude. The changes



done will stay with us and will transfer to the rest of the school team. The five major themes of Open the Doors emerged and were agreed at this meeting.



Our next meeting was the second-last seminar in Girona (Spain) in May 2017. We began the meeting with a performance of magic from one of our Cancun partner and we used this metaphor as a framework for dialogue. The partners concluded on the learning from the project. The missions are in Annex A above and there is more material on our website.

The school year is about to finish and it is time to harvest the capacity built, for the youth workers and the youth.

Our next step is to design the Intellectual Output: Guidelines for 21st century NEET prevention.

Through our conversations, we decided to centre the Guidelines on five key themes: Context, Youth Worker – Mindset, Working with Youth at Risk of Social Exclusion, Working with the missions and Perspectives and Opportunities. We want this guide to be very practical and easy to use for any youth worker that wants to learn about being entrepreneurial with youth at risk of social exclusion.

We had a final Partner Meeting in Porto (Portugal) in July 2017. The missions were done. The young people are on summer vacation and the partners need to close the circle. Practice partners began writing their narratives about this experiment and Knowledge Partners will construct these guidelines based on those learnings. We feel proud about our change in mentality and we know that those changes are here to stay and to keep developing them.



ANNEX C: Materials Used to Inform and Initiate the Project

Annex C1: [What is a Mission?](#)

Annex C2: [Mentor or Broker?](#)

Annex C3: [What NEET Youth Need](#)

Annex C4: [Social Gamification](#)

ANNEX C1: WHAT IS A MISSION?

WHY “MISSION”?

Why do we use the work MISSION in connection with capacity building of NEET youth? Why not use words like “activity”, “project” or “task”?
Because we need a new language for the capacity building of NEET youth, different from the traditional approaches...

The word MISSION is borrowed from computer gaming. Good computer games take the player through different levels of challenges and tasks that must be accomplished to complete the... mission.

Often new levels are more complicated to accomplish than the first ones, and often you will need the resources created along the first levels to accomplish the tasks at later levels. This means that you accumulate resources and skills along the different levels; precisely the skills and resources you will need to accomplish your mission. Therefore, you cannot simply jump to the last level, because you will not have the skills and resources to be successful at that level. And therefore you cannot change the order or sequence of the levels, as each level will create the needed capacity to accomplish tasks at the next level.

Most young people are very familiar with this “logic”; it’s in their blood. Therefore, we believe that this “computer game language” is useful when working with NEET youth. Another reference to the word MISSION is, of course, the religious mission: you go somewhere for a long time to preach a certain mentality, to help out people or to bring about some form of change in that location. The valuable element in this reference is: intention. You have a clear idea about what you wish to accomplish, a clear objective, and this objective is closely linked to *change*. You are also aware that you will need some time to accomplish your mission, and that you might need to struggle and learn new things.

Yet another reference might link to scientific missions or to military missions, making you think about exploration of new areas hitherto unknown, or developing strategies and tactics to defeat your enemy. However, the main reason for using the work MISSION is that it links strongly to the world of computer gaming. Furthermore, and this is also true for good computer games, you can never accomplish your mission alone: you need team work; you need to work with various forms of resources and alliances along the levels.

WHAT'S THE KEY MISSION OF THE MISSION?

The most important thing in the kind of mission that we work with is to create *capacity*.

Our missions are social missions, linked to real-life engagement and real-life change. The young people need to build capacity to accomplish such social change missions. The missions must help the young people build capacity to better manage their dead-end situations, and to create something useful for themselves. This means that the mission of the mission is always double:

- to create real change and new opportunities (social, economic, educational)
- to build social change capacity through the mission that can be used in any other context later on and independent of the actual and concrete aim of a mission

Why do the young NEETs need this?

Because for most young NEETs there are no other ways out than the ones they create themselves; for most of them education and good jobs are not realistic options... They need to be able to change the situation themselves, building on own resources and capacity. Society will not do it for them...

So, the key mission of the mission is to build capacity. *To do what?*

- To help create an experience about being able to take action to change one's situation instead of being stuck in anger and frustration
- To help developing a way to see the surrounding reality as something that can be impacted and changed
- To develop the skills and competences to identify opportunities in the communities, whether social or virtual
- To help create skills to create strong missions and to know how to take steps to accomplish them, including building up the needed resources, capacity and alliances along the steps
- To help create a strong mentality: if game over in one mission, get back into game by creating another

In short, the mission of the mission(s) is to create a feeling based on real experience that you are indeed able to do something for yourself and bring about change. NEETs are typically between 16 and 25 and they need those capacities to do well for themselves along a long life – no matter if they at some point find a traditional job or enrol in some form of education...

The truth is, in fact, that more and more young people, not only NEETs, will need such capacity in the constantly changing and unpredictable globalized economy. The missions are the tools with which we seek to build these capacities, since such capacity cannot be built in the classroom or through traditional empowerment approaches.

Of course, this is a chock to the traditional educational world and to the establishment of teachers, institutions and social workers. They are not at all prepared for this kind of capacity building and they will need to learn alongside the young NEETs!

WHAT CHARACTERISES A MISSION?

The key principles of such capacity building are embedded in the definition of a mission. Many types of missions are possible and very many directions might be taken, as no manual is possible or even useful. Part of the capacity building is precisely about the ability to find your own way. Nevertheless, and no matter how open the missions might be and how many different ways there might be to accomplish the missions, all missions should bring into play a number of key characteristics.

Why is that?

Because these principles are the ones that ensure strong capacity building, that's why! If these principles are not respected, the capacity building will either not occur, or be too weak to be useful and sustainable.

Let's mention the most important principles in creating missions for capacity building:

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

The missions to engage in should be missions impossible! At least impossible for the normal way we see things, and what can be imagined among the NEETs. The point is precisely that engaging in something you are already capable of will not produce new strong capacity, as you will simply repeat what you already can do. To be attractive and productive, the mission must be difficult, complicated and challenging – but of course within reach of strong efforts..!

DEDICATION

The mission must call for strong dedication – from the young team, but also from the professionals involved. The mission should be so interesting and attractive that dedication is constantly fostered along the work processes. Dedication is needed to build capacity, not only to reach the goals defined.

IMMERSION

Strong dedication leads to immersion: immersion is a state of mind in which you are totally buried in carrying out the tasks and activities you need to work your way towards accomplishing your mission. This characteristic explains why not all missions are good missions: if they do not create immersion, they are not strong enough, and little capacity building will result.

THINK BIG, BUT...

This is also why you need to think big!

If we engage the NEETs in small, trivial and unimportant challenges, we will simply add to their feeling of being underdogs and less important citizens.

The missions must be “big enough” to create respect among the NEETs and to challenge their feeling of being inferior young people with less opportunities and resources. Another reason for thinking big is that the mission must have a certain complexity, volume and duration to create immersion and thereby... capacity.

Small and punctual activities will not do the job. They will have very little impact on the capacity of the NEETs. Obviously, and it goes without saying, the missions should not be too big: building a spaceship flying to the moon is not a good mission.

The key point is: “big enough” to create immersion and capacity.

CHALLENGE THE NEETS

In other words, the mission must challenge the NEETs involved. They must be challenged with missions that they could not imagine being involved in. The mission itself must be able to create respect and dedication among them. The missions must be able to overcome their well-justified resistance to “well-meaning” activities from the establishment. They must create a feeling of brand new ways of working and being engaged in challenges that few other young people will be offered. The underdog becomes the alpha dog...

REAL-TIME AND REAL-LIFE

The missions can go in very many directions. The “juice” of the missions is not what they wish to accomplish in the end (the results), but what kind of capacity and new experience they create on the way. However, the missions need to engage in things that take place here and now in the communities (physical or virtual), or in emerging initiatives bringing about new things. They must be real-time oriented and link to what is happening here and now. They must also be real-life oriented: missions built on simulations, artificial challenges or purely theoretical activities are not relevant in this context, as they do not create the needed respect, engagement and... capacity.

LONG TIME

Such a mission could be short or long, right? Wrong.

Serious challenges, missions that call for respect, dedication and immersion – and in particular capacity building – need a certain amount of *time*. Changing mentality, experience and building new competences in real-life does not happen in a few days or weeks. It is not possible, of course, to indicate such a thing as the perfect duration of a mission, as missions, resources and engagement levels can be very different.

However, strong missions will typically need to be carried out in months, not days or weeks, such as for example 4, 6 or 8 months, and in some cases more if possible.

This is why such missions might work in parallel to other activities, organised by an institution or a labour market service. It is possible to create strong engagement if the young teams are engaged in the mission 1 or 2 full days a week along a certain number of months. Less will not do the job, and the more they are engaged the better.

WHO SHOULD BE MISSION FACILITATORS?

Who are the professionals to support the young teams in their missions?

In fact, teachers, academic professionals and social workers might not always be the best mission facilitators, as they carry a big burden of traditional academic mentality towards which many NEETs have created resistance along their problematic educational and drop-out careers.

If such professionals are involved, they will need to struggle their way out of their academic world and bring about a lot of changed mind-sets. Often youth workers, seniors, sport trainers, community role-models or entrepreneurs are much closer to what it takes to support the NEETs' mission work.

Such people are often less pedagogical, more direct and straightforward and will be able to establish better, open and more uncomplicated relationships with the NEETs, build on practical collaboration in the missions.

COMPLICATED

The mission must be complicated, just like good computer games. Not complicated in the academic sense, but complicated because many activities are needed, collaboration with many people is needed and because only a clever step-by-step strategy will allow moving from one level (activity) to the next. Whereas most NEETs will step back in front of academic complications, they do not have to fear this kind of complications.

BALANCING WISHES AND REALITY

It is a basic and absolutely necessary principle that a mission is based on the interest, skills, talents, dreams or aspirations of the young people. If not, the mission will fail big time. No engagement, no long-term dedication and no capacity building.

However, it is precisely a key role of the mission facilitators to prevent any naïve or totally useless mission from taking place. The ideas of the young people must be balanced and assessed against what makes sense, what is useful, what other people might appreciate and what can offer the young people sustainable social and/or economic change. The mission facilitators must be brave and direct and willing to counter and prevent such naïve or useless initiatives. This is in fact taking the NEETs seriously, and at the end it will create respect among the NEETs.

ENTREPRENEURIAL INSPIRATION

Our key words – capacity building and missions – are of course closely linked to the re-interpretation of what entrepreneurship means. Unlike in the old days where entrepreneurship was about creating a small business, today entrepreneurship has received a much broader interpretation: entrepreneurial mentality and behaviour has now been made independent of the end result (a small business) and is defined by the entrepreneurial process: taking action, trying out, experimenting, linking to real-life challenges, creating something new – and creating capacity to work through all the phases of entrepreneurial action. The end result can still be a small business, but also a service, an organisation, a club, a community initiative and much more...

The juice is the process, not the result, and the same is true for our key word *capacity building*. It is of extreme importance that capacity built up in one form of mission can be transferred to any other mission.

STEP BY STEP

The key method in our missions is precisely inspired by good and immersive computer games: the mission is complicated and we cannot simply make a big jump and accomplish this mission. Not possible. What, then? We need to proceed as the good computer games: step by step, level by level. We need to build up the capacity to accomplish the mission. The art of missioning is precisely to take the right steps in the right order and slowly build up the needed resources, alliances and power to accomplish the mission.

This often includes very many steps, along which we must learn, explore, build alliances, create plans, demonstrate our project, create economy, negotiate and struggle our way towards making the mission impossible possible.

Each successful step represents new resources and new alliances and new opportunities, allowing us to take the next step. To some extent the needed steps can be planned, but in many cases the stepwise progression will need to be adjusted to what really happens along the first steps.

LEARNING ON THE FLIGHT

Such capacity building is not about education or training. You cannot learn these things in the classroom. That does not mean that no learning will take place. A lot of learning will take place in most missions, but this learning is another kind of learning than in the classroom:

- It will take place when it is needed to solve problems at the different levels (situated learning)
- It will take place when the learning makes sense and is important (learning when needed and on demand)
- It will take place closely linked to real-life activities and challenges (relevance)
- It will take place when frustration arises along the mission process (motivation)
- It will be practically useful to the NEETs (theory and practice closely linked together)

So, the missions turn educational didactics upside down:

- In traditional education you learn in theory for 20 years and then start approaching practice and real-life
- In mission based learning you work in real-life and insert learning elements as needed

INVOLVES MANY 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

Working and struggling through such challenging missions will create very many and very important 21st century skills and competences. In the classrooms most young people will not even come near such competence development... Along the mission steps you need to analyse reality, seize opportunities, negotiate with community players, collaborate with alliance partners, present your mission with creative media, draw up financial plans and budgets, etc., etc.

Evidently those are key competences in the 21st century, highly appreciated by many companies and often more valued than long theoretical academic educations.

The point is: if we present such learning challenges to the NEETs in the abstract forum of the classroom, they will step back and drop-out.

When these learning challenges emerge from the progression towards accomplishing their own mission, the motivation to learn will be 10 times bigger.

It's that simple.

What is NOT a mission, then?

Let us close this small description of what a mission is and should be by indicating what cannot be considered missions (because such activities do not create capacity):

- Any punctual or short-term activity is not a mission
- Activities prepared over some time but still simple activities without further perspectives are not missions
- Engagement in already existing initiatives is not a mission
- Involvement in practical activities in the institution or in the community is not a mission
- Activities that do not create something new and useful for the NEETs and for other people are not missions
- Simple activities easy to accomplish are not missions

In short: activities that do not create the capacity described are not missions.

A mission is therefore defined by the capacity it creates among the NEETs and the perspectives it offers.

Does this mean that such non-mission activities are “bad” or “useless”?

Not at all. It simply means that such activities are not missions in our context, as they do not create the needed capacity among the young people.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE RESULT OF A MISSION?

What should, then, come out of working in such missions?

As mentioned, missions can go in all sorts of directions, as long as they create capacity and real change. The quality of a mission is not defined by the result of the mission – the content or topic, so to speak – but by its ability to create powerful capacity. So, no matter the concrete aim and result of a mission, it should create the following outcomes:

- New capacity, skills and competences among the NEETs to break out of dead-end situations and create something for themselves
- The capacity must be transferable to other missions and contexts
- The capacity built must be sustainable and long-term useful to the NEETs
- A new mentality among the NEETs, allowing and encouraging them to engage in similar missions in the future, if and when needed, and preferably allowing them to serve as role-models for other NEETs
- The mission should bring about a significant change in the social and economic situation of the young person, or as a minimum the resources to create such change
- The mission should create something new in real-life, such as in the local community or in virtual communities
- The mission should, to be successful, create something useful or attractive for other people; something that other people would like to use, participate in, buy or in other ways appreciate
- The mission should aim to create sustainable outcomes: what is accomplished by the mission should be continued, transferred or even expanded

As can be seen, these “outcomes criteria” are not at all linked to the content of the missions; they simply point to what makes a mission a mission.

A SMALL EXAMPLE OF A MISSION

As mentioned, missions can go in all sorts of directions, as long as they create the intended capacity and outcomes. When we say “in all directions”, we really mean it: a new residence for dogs, a social service, politics, an alternative sport club, online business, game development, internet services, a new shop, a music band, a new tourist service, whatever! Allow, then, a small example of what a mission might look like – first of all to indicate the many steps involved. The mission is fictive and we assume that it will take 6-8 months to accomplish the mission.

Step 1 in the progression

Challenge faced

One of the NEET teams is brought together to explore their talents, ideas, skills and aspirations. Several sessions were needed to accomplish this step.

Capacity built

Ability to explore one’s own history, skills and talents – and the ability to see those talents and ideas as resources and possible ways out of the dead-end

Step 2 in the progression

Challenge faced

What does not work in our community? What could be changed? What kind of virtual resources have not been created yet or well enough?

Capacity built

Investigating the community from all sorts of perspectives and detecting needs for change or useful innovations

Looking at the internet critically and with creative eyes: what’s not working? What could be created? In both cases: learning to see opportunities and openings for yourself and for possible initiatives in the community and in virtual spaces

Step 3 in the progression

Challenge faced

Confronting dreams, talents and interests with what should be changed in the community or what could happen in the cloud Result: we need an open and alternative basketball space in the community – the official club is in-door and only for young people who can pay; we want to create a new culture around this basketball area

Capacity built

The competence to link personal interests to strong opportunities of action, in the community as well as in the cloud

Step 4 in the progression

Challenge faced

Find out what's wrong with the existing basketball clubs and why many young people need alternative forms of basketball resources. What should be the principles and values of an alternative basketball community? Who should be involved?

Capacity built

Learning to analyse and describe a vision and to justify the initiative from various perspectives

Step 5 in the progression

Challenge faced

Presenting the mission with creative media, in print and online. Promoting the mission to relevant resources and players

Capacity built

Promoting the mission in various media
Getting support for this from skilled and interested resources in the community or in the cloud, including raising money for the virtual and printed material

Step 6 in the progression

Challenge faced

Creating a game plan:

- What kind of resources, decisions and support will the mission need?
- How can we build up alliances that makes our case stronger?
- How can we get support from the community, such as schools, youth clubs, the local police, the local bank, and other players?
- Where is the future basketball space, who owns the space? How can we get it?
- What are the economic perspectives?

Capacity built

Creating strategies for alliances, support and resources

Learning to build up a partnership of interested stakeholders to support the mission

Step 7 in the progression

Challenge faced

Having created the alliance partnership with stakeholders in the community, the key challenge is to start negotiating with the public authorities who owns the areas the mission needs for the basketball community

Drawing up plans for the establishment of the new basketball area, including getting expert support for estimating resources and investments

Capacity built

The ability to get support from professionals when needed and through promoting the mission as a strong and needed community initiative

The ability to bring together important stakeholders to support the mission in front of the municipality

Step 8 in the progression

Challenge faced

Working with the municipality to create the basketball project in the community, including planning the design of the area, the social functions of the area and what activities should be offered, who will drive and lead those activities and on what principles and values the open basketball area will be based?

Capacity built

Working together with many different players to realize the project created by the mission, including learning about new things along the flight

Reflecting on users, activities, values and principles – and on how to make the new basketball community work in practice

Step 9 in the progression

Challenge faced

Having created the basketball area and the physical basics, the community should be engaged in the new initiative, including young people not able to enrol in the official club

Further promotion of the new basketball community, this time to create and sustain its activities

Capacity built

Managing initiatives and activities in the community

Ensuring involvement and sustainable economy, including constantly mobilizing sponsors

Step 10 in the progression

Challenge faced

Telling the story

Creating a video and other forms of documentation telling the story of the mission and its accomplishment to the community, to other communities interested in the initiative and to the media

Capacity built

The ability to create further interest, sponsoring and opportunities through promoting the mission and its results

N.B.

Some of the efforts at certain levels were not successful at first. The NEET team and its alliances would then have to start from scratch at a certain level and work through the challenges at that level once again, this time based on lessons learned from the first and unsuccessful attempt.

Just to mention the many *wider perspectives* in this small fiction that might be inserted in the mission or result from the accomplished first mission (an accomplished mission might lead to a new mission at higher level):

- Studying, linking to or visiting the famous street basketball in New York
- Engaging a famous basketball player from the professional club in the metropole nearby as role-model
- Working on the social values of an open basketball community: engaging street youth, countering social marginalization and radicalisation
- Creating virtual forums for the alternative basketball community
- Promoting the alternative youth sport community in other cities
- Working on social and ethical values linked to basketball, such as anti-racism
- Working on sport and mental and physical health

- Creating spin-off activities for the young people in connection with the open basketball community
- Exploiting the initiative, if successful, to create further sponsoring and income, including creating youth jobs in connection with the new sport community

In the case of this small fiction, the mission is linked to what could be called young people's *sport entrepreneuring*.

ANNEX C2: MENTOR OR BROKER?

MENTOR OR BROKER FOR NEET YOUTH ?

The discussion of “mentor” or “broker” is extremely important and in fact symbolizes two very different directions, mindsets and practices.

Of course, “mentor” and “broker” has many things in common and the profiles overlap; however, it will benefit the discussion to try to simplify and clarify the differences between these directions to allow the project to create the needed platform of consensus.

This is the reason for this small contribution, aiming to present a confrontation between the two directions, and thus aiming to clarify the fact that two very different projects might result from the choice of direction.

Obviously, the project has been created in the spirit of the “broker”: the name “broker” is precisely used to “break out” of the traditional psychological oriented empowerment tradition.

Warning: any attempt to take the “easy” way – proposing an “average” of the two directions - will mess up the needed discussions and simply cover up that these directions are very different.

You are invited to continue the list of differences and to insert your comments on each of the elements in the list – and to share this in BaseCamp...

Background philosophy

MENTOR

Relationships needs to build on psychological, emotional and personal relations, established before any action can be taken

Concrete activities cannot be undertaken unless the personal and emotional relationships have been established

BROKER

Relationships are working relations and will be created along and through practical collaboration in concrete missions; emotional relations are not needed prior to taking action and might in fact complicate relations and well as missions

Typical profile

MENTOR

Academically educated, often in the fields of psychology, social sciences, education or pedagogy

The professional background is considered crucial to the capacity to work with the target group in question

BROKER

No special professional or educational background needed

Often good brokers are strong drivers of initiatives, based on a variety of experiences and based on a very action and change oriented mentality

General mindset

Strongly oriented towards psychological, social and pedagogical work methods and approaches, including giving priority to empathy, understanding and personal relations between the mentor and the young person – often strongly oriented towards individual mentoring

No special orientation as to the “inner world” of the young people, neither to building a priori personal relationships

Strongly action oriented and confident that relations will be built through taking concrete action: working relationships
The broker works with teams and individuals as needed

Typical work method

The mentor will most likely create individual sessions with a young person and try to match profiles between a mentor and a young person

The broker will engage in direct action-taking as soon as possible, based on a balancing of NEET youth interests and the “reality principle”

**Typical work method
(continued)**

MENTOR

The idea is to base initiatives and collaboration on appropriate profile matching and on well-established personal relations

Obviously this approach calls for considerable profiling among mentors as well as among young people, including considerable interviewing and matching

This approach advocates a person to person relationship as the basis of the collaboration

BROKER

The broker might wish to work team based to the extent possible
The broker believes that if personal relations will be built, they will be built through and result from practical collaboration

The broker will link possible personal relations to practical activities and collaboration with various community players

The approach advocates flexible team based collaboration

Typical progression

The mentor will give strong priority to step by step building of emotional and personal relations with the young person, often through individual mentoring

The broker directly addressed the social and economic situation of the young team and propose to them to create a joint venture to change the situation

ANNEX C3: WHAT NEET YOUTH NEED

WHAT NEET YOUTH NEED

NEED

- Competences to live and work and learn in a constantly changing society
- Creative technology competences to exploit present and future opportunities to work and learn – in non-academic ways
- Competences and mentality to manage change along a long life full of surprises and unexpected turns
- Entrepreneurial mind-sets to create their own living
- Competences to learn through self-directed internet resources
- Experience in working with communities, virtual as well as physical and social
- Self-confidence to take action and create something for themselves
- Learning through and in mixed realities of non-linear problem solving
- To navigate in a virtual mess, not reading books
- Recognition for intellectual capacity not confused with academic capacity

NOT NEEDED

- Short-term labour market skills
- To be devaluated to manual workers only able to perform practical tasks
- To be measured against an outdated education system
- To be exploited to fill short-term skills shortages
- To receive discount learning environments
- To be offered compensatory jobs and traineeships to help unemployment statistics
- Charity and compensation

ANNEX C4: SOCIAL GAMIFICATION

WHAT IS SOCIAL GAMIFICATION?

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Gamification is increasingly used for a variety of educational and training purposes, serving as a new and fresh motivator for many different people such as young people, managers and professionals in private and public organisations.

In most cases gamification is used in relatively controlled settings with clear activities, timing and goals.

In those cases gamification consists in one or more gameplay activities, well-structured and with clear rules, activities and success (reward) criteria.

Typically such activities are set up to work on people's mentality or to develop new competences within training scenarios.

Most gamification activities take place in such closed, controlled and highly structured settings (whether physical or virtual), not in the vibrant and unpredictable world outside the training locations.

We are, however, increasingly interested in challenging gamification to deal with social reality.

Obviously, such initiatives will need to work with gamification in a different way, introducing a new "gamification genre" perhaps, as such activity will be far less controllable and structured.

One might object to this use of gamification and argue that basic gamification principles will be lost when applied to the un-controllable and unpredictable field of social life.

We would respond that such use of gamification might not satisfy the traditional gamification criteria, and that gamification of social reality might call for a different definition and understanding of gamification.

Basically gamification means applying gameplay rules from all sorts of games, including digital games and serious games, in non-game situations – such as education and training.

Obviously such activity requires more or less controlled and structured settings.

When we talk about social gamification in this context we do not intend to carry the full gameplay infrastructures into social reality scenarios.

What we intend to do is to exploit important digital game and serious game features to help *drive, motivate and organize social action*.

To this end we are allowing us rather free interpretations of what gamification is and could be.

Frankly, the idea is not to satisfy gamification criteria, but to encourage social action! A certain undogmatic approach is needed...

What is social gamification, or what is it on the way to become?

Unlike traditional gamification that basically aims to change mentality or develop additional competences, *social gamification* aims to help people take action in social reality and to bring about social change.

In this context we use "social" in a very broad way, to designate a complex field of economic, labour market and life quality structures, basically defining the field to approach as different from for example digital or educational fields, characterized by being simulations and simulated scenarios.

"Social" could also be called "reality", but for example digital and educational fields are, in fact, part of what we call our "reality".

Therefore we prefer the term "social".

Social gamification helps people take real action in the surrounding world to change situations that do not work well for these people or for the community.

Social gamification is therefore linked to, and includes elements from, social innovation, social entrepreneuring or social enterprising, however not at the more systemic level of social innovation and not exclusively defined by the economic goals of social enterprising.

Social gamification is not an objective, it's a method; and in particular a method to help individuals and teams in need of social change to take proper action, to bring about social change.

Social gamification must be dynamic and experimentative, and should be assessed towards what it helps people accomplish and not towards how rigorously it can be defined.

Typical groups of citizens in need of social change are for example long-term unemployed, NEET youth, seniors and elderly, and in some countries less educated women.

What characterized these groups?

These groups are marginal in society as to influence, power and capacity to change their situation. They do not have the experience, networks or drive to take change action. Furthermore these groups often suffer from (well-justified) depressive and giving-up mentality.

We are offering them short-term labour market insertion with less perspective, short-term skills training and mental empowerment to increase their self-confidence.

We are not offering them to build capacity to change their situation in a long term and lifewide perspective, and it is not easy to do so.

This is where gamification comes in, as one possible way to build capacity for social change.

We are experimenting with gamification approaches to change the depressive and giving-up mentality of those people, adding gamification activities to the traditional mental empowerment aiming to build up increasing self-confidence.

We are convinced that gamification can contribute in new ways to such mental empowerment, but we are also increasingly aware that mental empowerment does not in itself change the social situations of these people.

In short, gamification of mental empowerment is not enough!

What we need is to experiment with approaches and methodologies to help these groups take *social action* – to bring change for themselves and at the same time, to the extent possible, addressing social problems or needs in the community.

What does take social action mean?

It means teaming up with peers to work the real world, to work the community, to work the reality.

It means creating something that can help change one's life direction, bring economy and create new social perspectives.

Typical example of such social life change are creating not applying for a job, getting a job in new ways, creating an association, establishing a business (including online), joining an organisation, offering new forms of services for kids, young people or elderly, etc.

The short definition of taking social action is: building capacity to engage in real-life activities that brings you social and/or economic benefit, or at least takes you in a positive direction and with further perspectives.

To the extent possible, such social action might as well bring value to the community, but it does not need to.

So, gamification of mental empowerment is not enough!

We need to experiment with forms of gamification that help these groups of citizens to go from mental empowerment to capacity to take real-life action.

Or, more radically: we need to experiment with new forms of gamification that create mental empowerment and self-confidence *through* taking real-life action.

Mental empowerment does not have to come before taking social action empowerment, as this model is linked to the old academic principle of *knowing before doing*.

In fact, too much mental empowerment activity can end up blocking the ability to take social action...

What gamification principles and resources can help these group take action and change their social situation?

Obviously, taking social action must happen over long and unpredictable time periods, such as months or even years, as this is the nature of social change. This makes it quite impossible to apply traditional, controlled and structured gameplay.

This also means that the idea of social gamification is to exploit other resources and principles in not only gamification, but in digital games and serious gaming.

Which are those principles and resources?

First of all, social gamification can provide people in need of social change with a framework of comprehension, as it offers to create an overall and coherent narration of the change process, including endowing each step and activity along the change process with meaning and direction. At the same time it can help changing the action-taker perspective from being a victim or object of society towards becoming the subject of a change process: from watching the movie (the game) to acting in the movie (the game).

More specifically, social gamification can help people and teams take social change action through applying the following examples of important and key taking action methods, deeply inspired by gamification, digital games and serious gaming:

LIFE AS A GAME

You build capacity to counter depressive mentality through leaning to see and approach social life as a game that you need to play well to win.

This general approach could also be described as creating a life narrative or taking your life to an epic level.

CREATING AND PURSUING MISSIONS

You build capacity through creating strong and valuable missions for yourself and your team, including achievable sub-missions.

The mission creation helps you structure and organize your engagement in a manageable way and to assess important stepwise achievements.

BUILDING ALLIANCES AND RESOURCES

You build capacity through learning to build alliances along your mission and sub-missions, as you know that you and your team is not able to accomplish social change alone.

You learn to create the most useful and realistic alliances in the stepwise progression towards your goals, including building new alliances on successfully established alliances.

PROGRESSING IN STEPS AND LEVELS

You build capacity through working your social change mission stepwise: you learn that you must take and accomplish certain steps to be able to meet the challenges at higher levels.

Thus you learn to “design” your mission steps in useful and effective ways, avoiding taking steps you are not ready or not yet qualified to take.

LEARNING WHEN NEEDED

You build capacity through inserting small and relevant learning time-outs exactly when you need them to accomplish a sub-mission.

You learn to avoid abstract and un-contextualized learning (“noise”) and to be highly motivated for learning helping you to overcome obstacles and allowing you to progress.

TRYING OUT AND OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

You build capacity through testing actions and strategies in real-life and in real-time, thus learning to find the best ways to overcome obstacles.

In some cases, especially at higher levels in the “game”, you will need to fail several times to find the right way. In this optic, failing is a capacity building resource, not simply a failure.

TAKING PRIDE IN ACHIEVEMENTS

You build capacity through taking pride in your stepwise successes and through sharing them with your team, peers or family.

Real-life achievements demanding considerable effort and sometimes risks are the most efficient way to build self-confidence.

CELEBRATING SUB-MISSIONS AND MISSIONS COMPLETED

You build capacity through openly celebrating and making visible key achievements along and at the end of the mission, involving key players, stakeholders, alliances and possible future supporters in the celebration.

THE GAME MUST GO ON

You build capacity through recognizing and experiencing that an accomplished mission simply leads to another.

The game is never over, it must be continued, and along the process what was at first a mission now becomes a sub-mission in the social game.

Basically all those principles and work methods build on the overall principle: the mission IS the game. The change is your reward.

One might engage in various forms of specific and contextualized gameplay along the mission, but the overall approach is precisely that the mission IS the game.

You create your own social game, your own life game and you need to learn to play it as well as possible.

As can be seen, social gamification is strongly linked to methodologies applied in such engagements as entrepreneurship, social innovation and community based learning and capacity building; however social gamification adds very strong principles, work methods and mechanics to these well-known engagements and can make a significant difference in the capacity building, if well managed.

Adult education, youth provisions and similar interventions need to make room for such experimentation, taking the empowermental processes out of the classrooms and into real-life action.

European Commission policy is increasingly calling for such direct change action in realisation of the limited impact of classroom based mental empowerment, and in favour of citizens' direct involvement in change processes.

Importantly, such policy and realisation should be backed up by substantial funding of such experimentation, at the moment very difficult to integrate in programs like Erasmus+, EaSI and the Social Fund.



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