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YOUTH REGAINED

Reframing attitudes of minors and youth at risk of
offending / re-offending through training

Major conclusion from the activity

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Youth Regained is a project which addresses the lack of education of youth (juvenile) offenders across Europe and the struggles (i.e., poverty, housing) they go through because of this. Another focus of the project is to raise awareness about key competences youth offenders need to develop to increase their employability. The proposed project aims to address this issue by working with local NGOs, CSOs and authorities to strengthen the employability of minors, youth at risk of offending or reoffending to increase their integration to the societies.

Overall, YOUTH REGAINED aims to:

- ✓ Strengthen ex-convicted child offenders' competences and basic skills in order to ease their transition to adulthood and support their integration in the labour market.
- ✓ Develop activities focusing on the strengthening of inclusion and employability of child offenders as young people with fewer opportunities.
- ✓ Support CSOs focusing on the protection and the re-integration of child offenders and encourage young people at risk of marginalisation to regain their life and place in the society.
- ✓ Engage CSOs and stakeholders from the business sectors and educate them to eliminate the stereotypes related to child offenders post release employability.

The main activities that will be implemented through the project and which will lead to the 3 project results are the following:

- ✓ Research and training (PR1: YOUTH REGAINED Good practice guide)
- ✓ OERs (PR2: YOUTH REGAINED E-course)
- ✓ Workshops and training (PR3: YOUTH REGAINED Awareness raising toolkit and training)

The conclusions below are based on the partners' activities with stakeholders. These activities were attended by: educators, probation officers, social workers, psychotherapists, youth workers, psychologists, criminologists, resocialization specialists.

Our research focused mainly on what competencies young offenders should develop to increase their chances of employment. The majority of young people in juvenile detention centres have an extremely low level of education and have difficulties with even basic skills such as reading a text and writing one. Several common competences emerged from the activities carried out for all the partner countries in the project: literacy skills (writing, reading) basic rules of conduct, communication, etiquette, speech skills, social skills, self-awareness, basic education), digital skills(how to prepare a resume, create a decent email and use it properly and politely; how to find the



information needed for life, how to deal with electronic government portals), leadership and coping skills, time management, active listening and specific practical and technical skills according to their professional preferences. Also, other skills that young offenders should cultivate in order to enter the labour market are: teamwork, developing their financial and legal knowledge and job search skills (how/where to find information about job vacancies, vacancies; what the job interview is and how to behave during it).

Emotional competences are another set of skills that are essential for increasing the competences of young offenders and improving their employability. Most young offenders struggle to understand their own emotions as well as those of others. Developing emotional intelligence would help them connect with their inner selves, enabling them to understand their needs, control their emotions, understand the effects of their actions and create positive interpersonal connections.

An important aspect our project focuses on is developing games that help young offenders develop their employability skills. Thus, each partner conducted several activities with stakeholders to see what games would be useful for young offenders and in what form these games should be: a board game or an online game. Role-playing games, games that encourage teamwork, games about how to get an interview and games based on real-life facts were just a few of the suggestions that stakeholders had for games that would be helpful for juvenile offenders.

As to the form in which the game should be developed, there are divided opinions among stakeholders. Some considered that an online game would be beneficial, because young people nowadays are more attracted to technology, others considered that a mix between an online game and a board game is the best, because an online game can engage them, and board games improve social skills and connections. But the most common opinion on this issue was that an online game is extremely difficult to implement in centres where young minors are, because of several problems. First of all, an online game cannot be implemented because of the lack of devices in educational centers for young offenders, the lack of staff to supervise them to see if they use the devices only for the game and because of the bureaucratic procedures that would require the introduction of devices in these centers in case of an online game. Secondly, respondents also noted various disadvantages of an online game, strictly related to young offenders: reduced human contact, screen addiction or reduced development of social skills.

The idea of developing an online game to develop the skills of young offenders would be ideal, but is difficult to implement in most centres due to the shortcomings outlined above. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to allocate more resources, both economic and professional, from the state authorities, to have a greater presence of technology in the centres where young people are and to have a trained and numerous staff to supervise them.



Recommendations:

To develop both hard and soft competences. The most frequently mentioned competences during the activities were: literacy skills (writing, reading) basic rules of conduct, communication, etiquette, speech skills, social skills, self-awareness, basic education), digital skills(how to prepare a resume, create a decent email and use it properly and politely; how to find the information needed for life, how to deal with electronic government portals), leadership and coping skills, time management, active listening. Also, other skills that young offenders should cultivate in order to enter the labour market are: teamwork, developing their financial and legal knowledge and job search skills (how/where to find information about job vacancies, vacancies; what the job interview is and how to behave during it). The competences mentioned on LifeComp should also be taken into account.

The materials should be developed in two parts: a more theoretical part for educators so that they know what to do with young people and a more practical and interactive part that addresses young people.

Interactive activities should be developed to attract young offenders. It should be kept in mind here that these activities should be piloted. For this reason, each partner has to develop activities that fit with the specific of the own country.

Even if online activities would be ideal, they are very difficult to implement in most partner countries. For partners who are not able to implement online activities, a suitable option would be the boardgames, which can be displayed in a PPT presentation.



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