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COMPASS

Career cOnsulting and Mentoring skills CaPAcity building for youth workerS with NEETS

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COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK FOR
YOUTH WORKERS



 CATRO



UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALY

pistes solidaires



PREDICT
CSO CONSULTING



ACCIÓN
LABORAL



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Executive summary

It appears that a clear agreement has been reached across Europe about the substance of youth work – not only for the young person but for the whole society on a local, regional or national level. In the last few decades, youth work's strong link to employability has been highlighted in the stated objective to 'develop youth work as a resource to support youth employability' (EC, 2009: 6).

Although efforts on an European level for enhancing the capacity of youth workers continue, it is observed that they still struggle in finding the best approach to youngsters and in coping with everyday challenges of activating NEETs. Based on disparities among Europe and on the ongoing cohesion policy, the COMPASS project aims at supporting the countries facing the highest rates of unemployment among NEETs and at equipping youth workers with tailor-made measures.

In a world of disrupting change and socio-economic uncertainty, partners from six countries – Bulgaria, Austria, Greece, France, Romania and Spain - got together and investigated in depth how to contribute to the growth and personal development of the youth workers in their countries. The quantitative and qualitative research conducted in the first stage of the project concluded that youth workers should possess a wide range of skills and competences in order to answer to the needs of the youngsters they are working with.

According to the demographic data collected, a profile of the youth workers could be described – most of the people working with NEETs are between 25-35 years old and possess a Bachelor or Master degree, mainly in Social science. A substantial number of them haven't passed through a special training dedicated to soft-skills development.

Based on more than 200 answers in the online survey and 30 individual interviews with youth workers, the consortium created a competence model carefully adapted to the main challenges they are facing with a particular emphasis in youth workers' skills for facilitating a career counselling and mentoring process. The competence model subtracts 6 key competences with 5 behaviours each, summarizing the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes required.

This competence framework would be the basis for the next project phases, ensuring that all the products developed will be tailor-made to the needs of the youth workers and provide cutting-edge methodologies and instruments for NEETs activation – a competence-based training for youth workers and a gamified platform for youth empowerment.



Competence framework for youth workers

The competence framework acknowledges the importance of youth work in the socio-economic development in the countries in EU. It focuses on supporting young people in labour market integration and their empowerment through an innovative and efficient approach that will ensure their long-term motivation. Also, the competence framework will serve as a source of inspiration for the development of youth workers' training programme, and support them in assessing their own competences. It includes a number of desirable competences and behaviours that reflect healthy underlying attitudes.

Based on 'A Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally', we are also focusing on the following four dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

- Attitudes (the youth workers' willingness) are the pre-requisite, the foundation for competence development. They lead to
- knowledge (gained through experience, books, the Internet, etc.) and
- skills (ability to perform a task, to apply knowledge and turn attitudes into actions), which will then lead to
- appropriate and contextual behaviour.

Therefore, behaviour encompasses attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Through behaviour we can assess the competence level of the youth worker and whether it is sufficient for his/her work. In short: behaviour reflects the underlying attitudes of a youth worker. ¹

1) EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, RESILIENCE AND SELF-CARE

- Paying attention to one's mental, physical and emotional state and incorporating habits and attitude which make one stable and efficient in the work environment.
- Being able to understand one's internal states, preferences, resources and emotions, as well as their role in the successful professional and personal occupation.
- Managing one's internal states and resources by keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check and taking responsibility for personal performance.
- Demonstrating persistence, commitment and a strong achievement drive in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks.
- Tackling others' feelings, perspectives and needs, and taking an active interest in their concerns by being attentive to emotional cues, listening well and showing sensitivity.

¹ A Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally



2) YOUTH WORKER EFFICACY

- Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence, by being informed about recent changes and opportunities in one's professional sphere.
- Incorporating strategies for efficient planning and prioritizing, in order to coordinate and manage one's daily tasks and tackle the progress of each youngster in a long-term perspective.
- Always seeking and experimenting with innovative and digital tools and approaches which could be useful for working with NEET's
- Actively promoting teamwork with colleagues, initiating collective learning in the youth workers' team and using the results to improve the effectiveness
- Depending upon the nature of the problems that youngsters are facing, evaluating the best solutions, potential risks and resources needed and proposing mediation support if necessary.

3) EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Listening actively, asking questions and being aware of the body language in order to understand the real needs and aspirations of the NEETs in a one-on-one conversation.
- Adaptation of one's communication style, taking into account the cultural and psychological diversity of the interlocutor
- Giving effective feedback focused on the behaviour and the effect of behaviour, pointing out NEETs progress, but also suggesting areas of improvement for successful goal realisation;
- Making constant efforts to contribute to the growth of the relationship, using an assertive approach of mutual respect and transparency.
- Demonstrating honesty and acceptance about the NEETs opinion, aspirations and goals and provoking action.

4) MOTIVATING AND EMPOWERING NEET'S

- Providing personal support in dealing with crisis situations in a transparent & constructive manner.
- Using playful elements in the one-on-one session with youngsters such as the Moving motivators cards.
- Provoking ownership of the already set goals corresponding to the internal motivation drives of the NEET.



- Believing in NEET's potential and supporting him/her in creating a positive and realistic self-image by boosting self-confidence.
- Provoking a growth mindset of the youngsters by being a role model and transforming the challenges into opportunities.

5) CAREER COUNSELLING

- Analysing the NEET's individual situation and supporting them with patience in identifying their learning needs and styles, as well as the appropriate career step, by using creative and innovative methods.
- Accommodating to NEETs with issues in connection to labour market orientation and job searching tools and strategies (CV, Motivation letter, preparation for job interview).
- Being able to set SMART goals and an individual plan, involving the youngsters actively in the process and aligning them with the current socio-economic situation in the country.
- Guiding and supporting NEETs through mentoring and coaching techniques to achieve the already set SMART goals and to evaluate their progress
- Providing regular opportunities for self-reflection, as well as for peer-to-peer learning, in order to create group cohesion and provoke youngsters to take action.

6) NETWORKING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Investing time for creating contacts with stakeholders in various sectors by participating in career and local events.
- Demonstrating interest, initiative and proactiveness in communication with potential employers, in order to gain better employment opportunities for youth.
- Sharing and exchanging on a monthly basis relevant information and good practices in youth work internally with colleagues, but also externally with international partners and stakeholders.
- Organizing networking events and career forums, in order to create a setting for gathering employers and youngsters.
- Using on a daily basis different social media tools, developing social media campaigns to promote vocational education, training programmes and non-formal activities.



Conclusions and next steps

Career counseling skills possessed by youth workers in EU are an integral part of their success. Furthermore, according to the main findings, they should also have additional competences such as emotional intelligence, effective communication skills, motivation techniques, networking and digital skills.

The main objective of the present report is to provide a competence framework for youth workers who are dealing with NEETs activation among 6 European countries. It is crucial for them to have concrete behaviors, so that they can access this competence and underline specific areas for focused development. The proposed six-step competence model has been clearly defined and its importance has been revealed as the appropriate tool/mechanism in the youth worker “toolkit” that would facilitate their contribution towards the smooth integration of young people.

Therefore, a competence-based training will be elaborated with practical tools and exercises which will develop the already identified competences.

An added value for the unique COMPASS approach will be the gamified platform for NEETs activation with empowering missions and motivational content, containing interactive activities, educational videos and playful elements, ensuring the long-term motivation and engagement of the users.





References

Salto Youth (2016). Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally

