



Certified youth workers to work with youth at risk

FORMALISING COMPETENCES AND IMPROVING QUALIFICATION OF PES EMPLOYEES WORKING DIRECTLY WITH AT-RISK YOUNG PEOPLE AND STRENGTHENING THEIR COOPERATION ACROSS SECTORS.

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A new certification system for youth work was introduced to formally recognise the value of youth work as a public service, and youth workers as qualified specialists who put policy into practice. Within this, it was the first time that a unified list of competences was developed that could be applied to all professionals that work with young people, no matter which sector they belonged to. It provided youth workers with an opportunity to obtain, develop and recognise their competences and skills and further develop their knowledge of different aspects of youth work. Under this project, 23 Lithuanian PES employees were able to gain a certificate in youth work and in total 182 youth workers from different sectors gained qualifications. The training has enabled Lithuanian PES youth counsellors to meet and share knowledge with other youth workers from different sectors. The training has given youth workers the skills, competences and knowledge to meet the needs of individual young people.

LITHUANIA

Name of the PES	Lithuanian Labour Exchange, under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour
When was the practice implemented?	2014 – 2016
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	Lithuanian Labour Exchange, under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour Education Exchanges Support Foundation The Department of Youth Affairs, under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	PES counsellors who work directly with young people. More widely, participation was open to everyone who worked with young people in any sector. The requirements included that the person was at least 21 years old, with a completed secondary education, previous youth work experience or willingness to work with young people, work experience with a youth organisation, and motivation to become a qualified youth worker.
What were the practice's main objectives?	The aim the youth worker certification system was to establish and maintain high-quality work with young people in order to facilitate their personal and social growth, and ensure effective cooperation between experts from public institutions and non-governmental organisations.
What activities were carried out?	Since autumn 2014, a training programme has been delivered to 80 specialists from local labour exchanges and youth job centres to develop their counselling skills for working with complex and unmotivated young people. The training programme was focused on 1) developing the competences of staff who work with young people, 2) new methodological tools assimilation, and 3) practical skills assessment tool management for clients. The programme was delivered over two years and training took place over five days and sometimes on weekends. In addition, the certification system consisted of an evaluation of the current competences, trainings, internships, reflections, evaluation and being awarded a certification. It included five training programmes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Self-perception in the youth work context 2 Understanding of adolescence and youth world 3 Individual work with a young person 4 Working with groups and delinquent behavior 5 Methodologies of youth work This covered approximately 32 different competencies. Each of these training programmes lasted approximately four to five days and each youth worker was required to undertake a series of internships thereafter to implement their newly developed skills. It is intended that certificated youth workers share their acquired theoretical and practical knowledge with other youth counsellors.

<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>The distribution of roles and responsibilities between the institutions were clearly defined in a legal framework, however, no organisation, or specific sector, was formally required to take part in the training. All of the local labour exchanges were formally informed about the training by letter. This encouraged them to suggest counsellors to take part.</p> <p>Youth workers were informed about the programme and its timings in advance so that they could arrange their workload around the programme commitments. Other Lithuanian PES counsellors covered their activities when needed, for example when the youth worker was attending a training session.</p> <p>A self-assessment tool was created for participants to reflect on their competences for youth work, and their future plans for developing skills. The results from this were used at the start of the programme to carefully select relevant practical sessions for participants that would help them gain theoretical knowledge and competences.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>European</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>People reached: 23 Lithuanian PES employees working with youth received certificates after participating in the 'Development of Integrated Youth Policy' project and activities of the 'Implementation of the Youth Worker certification system.'</p> <p>In total, 182 certified youth workers and 350 people were trained.</p> <p>Products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Training sessions for 80 local labour exchanges and youth job centre specialists; ▶ Guidelines on 'What is a youth worker?' and 'What competences does a youth worker have to have?'; including the 32 competences required; ▶ Certification system, including evaluation of present competences, training, internships, reflection activities, evaluation and certification.
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>Youth workers are now recognised as qualified specialists and youth work has become standardised and professionalised across Lithuania. The project has developed the competences of youth workers by giving them the opportunity to look at specific areas and undertake a mix of theoretical and practical experiences. This has helped the trained Lithuanian PES counsellors to provide tailored individual services and activities according to the needs and aspirations of each young client.</p> <p>A wider outcome of the project is the cross-sectoral networking. The training brought together youth workers from different fields and this led to valuable discussions about best practices.</p>
<p>What are the lessons learnt and success factors?</p>	<p>Youth workers have provided positive feedback about the training course. They found it to be an invaluable experience to enhance their counselling skills and that it will better equip them to deal with the needs of young people.</p> <p>The certification system allows youth workers to obtain, develop and gain qualification for their skills, knowledge and competences and this can help them to continue their professional development in this area and respond to the evolving needs of young people. In particular, the training has given youth workers the skills, competences and knowledge to be more flexible, mobile and innovate, and embrace migration issues and IT developments so that they can use technology to reach out and engage with young people.</p> <p>While the certification system is up and running, the list of competences and the methodology for the certification programme is being updated to incorporate the recent results of the work that the Council of Europe has undertaken on youth work competencies.</p>



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