Success at school – SAS

Volunteering : an alternative strategy to enhance a way back to school for youngsters facing difficulties at school

project leader :

partners :

in United Kingdom   France   Bulgaria   Italy   Portugal   and Slovenia

1

Success at school through volunteering
- a training course for youngsters facing difficulties at school
or having already left school (dropouts)

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General background

- ✓ School failure is a major cause of social and professional exclusion among youngsters. It is rare to meet youngsters who would be totally opposed to school. Most of the time they are most disillusioned and stressed by traditional teaching and feel they can not find their place within the existing schooling system. This may lead to their disengagement and rejection and, ultimately, exclusion from the school system.

- ✓ The main objective of the Success at School through Volunteering - SAS project is to expose youngsters affected by early school leaving and living in difficult situations to a pedagogical approach involving young people in volunteering opportunities which enable them to identify and valorize/value the skills and competences learnt through their involvement.

- ✓ The SAS project is a way both to open perspectives for youngsters and to develop their learning abilities through an alternative method, the "detour" strategy. Youngsters are developing both basic competences (reading, writing, calculating) but also social and civic competences (being a citizen). Through the achievement of a voluntary action, early school leavers (ESL) may find a way back to school.

- ✓ In the short term, a bridge should be built between associations offering school mentoring and having experienced the SAS approach. In the mid-term, youngsters could be awarded some "credits" in their educational courses. Further development of the link between a voluntary experience and education should be in a longer term be the basis for a VPL or a validation of the learning outcomes linked to volunteering in terms of diploma or access to a level of education or "official pass" to come back to school.

- ✓ In a broader perspective, the SAS project may reduce the number of early school leaver by improving learning outcomes for learners, especially youngsters from a migrant and disadvantaged background and with special needs through an alternative pedagogical strategy. According to the last data, 19 million children were at risk of poverty prior to the crisis in the EU, they are particularly sensitive to ESL.

- ✓ A voluntary experience enables youngsters to acquire and/or develop skills and competences that are most useful for pupils affected by early school leaving and may enable their return to school. Volunteering is part of non-formal and informal learning enhanced by the Copenhagen process. Among an association, youngsters apply theoretical knowledge learned at school, enrich their social network, acquire or develop skills and competences, exchange good practices in learning. Moreover, a project implemented in an association is also a way to motivate pupils facing difficulties at school or affected by early school leaving. They can develop a positive image of themselves; recover their self-esteem and a taste for learning. A voluntary action may also be a useful experience for preparing them to think of a professional future. Concrete results may be achieved by pupils

Success at school through volunteering
- a training course for youngsters facing difficulties at school-

✓ **Public** : The training course addresses youngsters, aged 14 to 20 years, facing difficulties at school and/or those who have already left school (not in education, nor employment nor in training, the so-called NEET) or affected by early school leaving (ESL) according to the European terminology. An "average profile" of early school leavers might be identified through the SAS project in order to propose a "preventive" method for schools, teachers/educators and families to prevent any future school failure.

✓ **Strategy**: youngsters are fully involved ; they are put in a position of being actors within a larger scheme. Together they will devise an associative project that benefits both the most, where the objective is to enhance a success at School or a way back to school. This is the "applied part" of the proposed training course. The spirit of the pedagogy is to develop an alternative way to learn, based on informal and non-formal learning, through volunteering, and so to build a bridge with formal learning (acquired at school).

✓ **The conception of the training course** together with the pedagogical approach take into account the profile of youngsters facing difficulties at school or affected by early school leaving (ESL) by valuing the recreational aspects of teaching in order to break away from the classic model (role playing, learning how to act in certain situations…)..

✓ **Main points** to be taken into account:

1. Various pedagogical approaches focused on inclusion of learners (including the "detour" strategy) ;
2. Enriching the training with national specificities or needs expressed by the educational system ;
3. Enhancing a collaborative work ; a tandem gathering early school leavers and pupils facing school difficulties;
4. Asking for the testimonies of pupils having left school, others who are facing difficulties and other having met difficulties and who finally succeeded ; others who have succeeded despite social difficulties of their family ;
5. Identifying the experience gained by youngsters, expressing it in terms of competences, providing any document or justification of the experience,
6. A special focus is made both on the profile of the target groups (youngsters affected by early school leaving) and the main barriers/obstacles faced in expressing this experience in terms of skills & competences..
7. proposing an action plan in order to enhance a return to school. The action plan will integrate these points in order to propose ways to overcome them

✓ Different topics will be discussed together with youngsters :

1. **Definition** : What is Volunteering ? Who are the volunteers (profile) ? Why are they volunteers (motivations) ? What are the values/notions linked to a voluntary involvement (solidarity, altruism, exchange…) ? Is it something for nothing ?

2. **Role and status of a volunteer:** How to enhance a voluntary experience as a way to become a citizen (rights of the association, democratic process)? What does it mean to be a volunteer today ? How is an assiation run ? Am I able/allowed to be a volunteer? how far can I be a volunteer under 16/18 years? How can I help ? What is the process/procedure to be followed ?

3. **Educative dimension of the involvement** (informal and non-formal learning)-Is learning only the field of school or can I learn elsewhere ? Does it exist other ways to learn ? What am I asked to do as a volunteer ? What are the tasks ? ;

4. **Professional dimension of a voluntary experience** - being recognized as a "real" professional experience Could a voluntary experience help me in my professional future ? How can I express a voluntary experience in terms of professional experience ? could you give me examples of activities I could fulfill that could be considered as professional experience ?

5. **Social dimension**- highlighting the social dimension of an associative engagement (learning life values, resisting exclusion, vehicle of integration, from the individual to the collective level. What can I do alone ? what can't I do alone ?what can I do for free? What can't I do for free ? what is a social perspective ? who could I help ? what are the main domains of activities of the associations ? in my neighborood, could I make a difference ?

6. **Cultural dimension** - intercultural exchanges and dialogue thanks to a voluntary experience: Does volunteering exist in other countries ? in Europe, where the volunteers are the most numerous? Could I meet other volunteers in other countries ? Could we create a network of young volunteers with other countries ? (to begin with the countries partners of the SAS project ?

✓ **The training course** takes into account results of other programmes/actions already implemented in the past years in Europe and/or in the different country partners of the consortium :

1. In UK : examples provided by the University of Northampton
2. In France : examples provided by iriv and Assfam
3. In Bulgaria:examples provided by Cermes
4. In Italy: examples provided by the University of Bologna
5. In Portugal: examples provided by the CIES-ISCTE…
6. In Slovenia: examples provided by the Ergo-Institute

Introduction- **The reason for the SAS project**
Early school leaving (ESL)- Situation, problems and perspectives
Methodological introduction into the Curriculum

Theoretical content

1. General background – what is Early School Leaving (ESL)
2. Volunteering as a non formal and informal learning - the European Year of Volunteering (2011)
3. The SAS project - a Comenius project - the lifelong learning perspective

Practical content

1. Make clear to participants that a group learning process is intended which is based on the experience/proposals of participants
2. Make clear to participants that the work will be much more productive, if they combine positive examples and success/ negative examples and failures to insist on the difficulties youngsters may be faced to
3. Try to gain a clear insight of participants' expectations and preferences.

Learning outcomes

1.Being clear about the main aim of the training course for the youngsters
2.Proposing a value of the learning outcomes combining both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge
3.Elaborating a collaborative approach among youngsters encouraging personal resaearch

Practical context – geographical scope
England – region around Northampton
France – Ile de France (region around Paris)
Italy – Emilia-Romagna (region around Bologna)
Slovenia- all the country
Portugal- region around Lisbon
Bulgaria- region around Sofia

Topic 1- **Definition of volunteering**
Profile of volunteers
Notions attached to volunteering : solidarity, altruism, exchange...

Objectives - Definition : What is Volunteering ? Who are the volunteers (profile) ? Why are they volunteers (motivations) ? What does it mean to be a volunteer today ? What are the values/notions linked to a voluntary involvement (solidarity, altruism, exchange…) ? Is it something for nothing ?

Theoretical content /general knowledge

1. Definition of Volunteering
2. Profile of Voluntees
3. Notions attached to volunteering

Practical content – method

Method : Group learning process – discussion in small groups on the ideas/stereotypes on Volunteering

1. positive examples and success of volunteers/voluntary inittatives
2. negative examples and failures volunteers/voluntary inittatives

At the end of this module, you will have learned – Learning outcomes (theoretical outcomes)

1.Knowledge - The different notions discussed such as volunteering, altruism, solidarity…
2.Hard skills or technical skills - legal framework of volunteering (existing law) and the way to find the legal basis of this activity
3.Soft skills or relational skills - work in small groups with the dispatching of the roles in the group (speaking, writing, summarising ideas…)

At the end of this module, you will be able to – skills & competences (practical outcomes)

1. Organize a discussion group with people defending a proposal/people finding critics against the proposal
2. Defend my ideas in a small group
3. Present the ideas of a group which I represent among a wider audience

Topic 2- Being a volunteer
Joining an association
Civil & civic rights

Objectives- Role and status of a volunteer: How is an assiation run (rights of the association, democratic process)? Am I able/allowed to be a volunteer? How far can I be a volunteer under 16/18 years? How can I help ? What is the process/procedure to be followed ?

Theoretical content /general knowledge

1. Being a volunteer
2. Joing an association
3. The ability to create or to join an - civil & civic rights

Practical content – method

Exercice in small group (3 to 4 people per group): creating an association

1. Finding a cause to be defended/ a project to be implemented
2. Finding a name and giving an objective to an association -
3. Writing the status of an association following a given sample

At the end of this module, you will have learned – Learning outcomes (theoretical outcomes)

1. Knowledge - The legal gramework of volunteering and the rules to be followed
2. Hard skills or technical skills - creating an association , writing its status
3. Soft skills or relation skills - work in small groups, enhancing discussion, participating to the discussion, sharing views with others

At the end of this module, you will be able – skills & competences (practical outcomes)

1. To create an association or any non profit organisation
2. To prepare a project by writing a content and finding a name
3. To present an ideas in a group

8

**Topic 3- Emphasizing the educational dimension of a voluntary involvement
informal and non-formal learning
building a bridge with formal learning (school)**

Objectives - Educative dimension of the involvement (informal and non-formal   learning)-Is learning only the field of school or can I learn else-where ? Does it exist other ways to learn ? What am I asked to do as a volunteer ? What are the tasks to be fulfilled in an association ? ;

Theoretical content /general knowledge

1. Educative dimension of volunteering: non formal and informal learning
2. The Key competences (EU 2006) enhanced by the European Union
3. Competences at school/competence in the association

Practical content – method

Discussion in small groups on the following questions :

1. Which competences are expected at school (at the end of the secondary education) / in the associations ?
2. What are the main obstacles to overcome at school / in the association?
3. The "job" of a pupil / the "job" of a volunteer ?

At the end of this module, you will have learned – Learning outcomes (theoretical outcomes)

1. Knowledge - The notion of learning, difference between formal, non formal and informal learning
2. Hard skills or technical skills - the definition of basic competences and the key competences
3. Soft skills or relational skills - work in small groups with the dispatching of the roles in the group , enhancing discussion

At the end of this module, you will be able – skills & competences (practical outcomes)

1. to learn with others
2. to identify competences
3. to be aware of one's commitment in a group (at school, in an association)

Topic 4-   Building a professional future thanks to a volunteering
Valuing a voluntary experience in terms of professional competences ….

Objectives- Professional dimension of a voluntary experience – How can a voluntary experience be recognized as a "real" professional experience ? Could a voluntary experience help me in my professional future ? How can I express a voluntary experience in terms of professional experience ? Could you give me examples of activities I could fulfill that could be considered as professional experience ?

Theoretical content /general knowledge

1. Building a professional future thanks to volunteering
2. Valuing a voluntary experience in terms of professional competences
3. The portfolio approach

Practical content – method

Exercice – the Vaeb portfolio is dispatched among youngsters (simplified version) and they work on the tool in small groups (2-3 people)

1. Identifying an experience and expressing it in 2-3 lines
2. From experience to competence : expressing the experience in competences
3. Action plan : what shall I do in the coming months : which association to join to acqur

At the end of this module, you will have learned – Learning outcomes (theoretical outcomes)

1. Knowledge - The portfolio approach
2. Hard skills or technical skills - how to use a portfolio
3. Soft skills or relation skills – being able to fill with another youngster or/a teacher a portfolio (from experience to competence)

At the end of this module, you will be able to – skills & competences (practical outcomes)

1. To express one's experience
2. To identify a competence on the basis of the experience gained
3. To think of a "professional" future in terms of experience/competence

Topic 5-   Highlighting the social dimension of a voluntary engagement/involvement
Learning life values, resisting exclusion, vehicle of integration ….

Objectives - Social dimension of a volunteering- learning life values, resisting exclusion, vehicle of integration, from the individual to the collective level. What can I do alone ? what can't I do alone ?what can I do for free? What can't I do for free ? Who could I help ? What are the main domains of activities of the associations ? in my neighborood, could I make a difference?

Theoretical content /general knowledge

1. The key concept of social exclusion
2. Volunteering and social inclusion - role of the association
3. Barriers to overcome to enhance the empowerment process

Practical content – method

Exercice in small group (3 to 4 people per group): implementing a project in an association

1.   Finding a project to be implemented
2.   Defining the aim & concrete goals to be achieved
3.   Main steps to be followed

At the end of this module, you will have learned – Learning outcomes (theoretical outcomes)

1. Knowledge - The different notions discussed (exclusion, social barriers …)
2. Hard skills or technical skills - the empowerment process, the involvement and the commitments linked to it
3. Soft skills or relation skills - work in small groups to work on a collective project

At the end of this module, you will be able – skills & competences (practical outcomes)

1. To select a project
2. To express the project and communicate to others
3. To build a timetable (steps to be followed)

Topic 6 - Enhancing the cultural dimension of a voluntary experience - intercultural exchanges and dialogue

Objectives- Cultural dimension - intercultural exchanges and dialogue thanks to a voluntary experience: Does volunteering exist in other countries ? in Europe, where the volunteers are the most numerous? Could I meet other volunteers in other countries ? Could I belong to a network of young volunteers with other countries ? (to begin with the countries partners of the SAS project ?

Theoretical content /general knowledge

1. Intercultural dimension (EU approach)
2. The discrimination perspective (EU directive of 2001 & national background)
3. Volunteering as a means of integration

Practical content – method

Exercice : in small group (2-3 people)

1. identify a discrimination youngsters may be faced to – explain the specific context
2. think of a way struggle against this kind of discrimation
3. build an action to inform the public/media on this action through tools such as a weblog or facebook pages (explain your choice)

At the end of this module, you will have learned – Learning outcomes (theoretical outcomes)

1. Knowledge - The notion of discrimination and the ways to struggle against it
2. Hard skills or technical skills - developing a communication tool to struggle against a specific discrimination
3. Soft skills or relation skills - work in small groups and creatin a network in your country and aborad to inform on the discrimination

At the end of this module, you will be able to – skills & competences (practical outcomes)

1. To identify a situation of discrimination
2. To defend a personal point of view through a communication tool
3. To build a network to inform on a specific problem

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