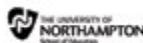


Cristina Devecchi (Ed.)
on behalf of the **Success at School** team

VOLUNTEERING AS EMPOWERMENT FOR SUCCESS AT SCHOOL



Lifelong
Learning
Programme



CIES-IUL
CORPORATE INSTITUTE FOR
LIFELONG LEARNING



Ergo:
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VOLUNTEERING
AS EMPOWERMENT
FOR SUCCESS
AT SCHOOL

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CHAPTER 1:

Success at School: tackling early school leaving through mentoring and volunteering

Cristina Devecchi, University of Northampton

1. Introduction: the problem of early school leaving across Europe

It is sometimes easy to fall prey of the general sense of failure and hardship of the times we are living in. No doubt, there is, sadly, much to be concerned about. The economic reality of many European countries has not improved and economic inequalities are increasing. As a consequence, the regime of austerity has had negative consequences on many aspects of live for all generations. For the increasingly aging European population, the economic downturn has limited the care services available. For young people the prospects of employment are still struggling to meet the demand of a disaffected workforce. For many children and young people, in particular, the present educational systems are a barrier rather than a support to their aspirations, dreams and success.

Within this general outlook, the Success at School project (www.successatschool.eu) offers a beacon of light and hope. Located within the struggle to tackle the problem

of early school leaving (ESL). At the 2000 European Council in Lisbon¹, the European Union defined the dimension of the school failure problem as: “The number of 18 to 24 years old youngsters with only lower-secondary level education who are not in further education and training”, now defined with the acronym NEET (not in employment, education or training) and comprising young people aged between 15-24².

In 2009 more than six million young people, 14.4% of all 18 to 24 year olds, left education and training with only lower secondary education or less. Even more worrying, 17.4% of them completed only primary education. Early school leaving represents missed opportunities for young people and a loss of social and economic potential for the European Union as a whole.

An EU benchmark was set, that the proportion of early school leavers (ESL) should be less than 10% by 2020³. This percentage is a target for achieving a number of key objectives in the European 2020 strategy and one of the five benchmarks of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. However, the percentage of young people defined as NEETs has increased due to the present economic crisis. As Mascherini, *et al.* (2012: 1)⁴ report

[...] in 2008, the figure stood at 11% of 15–24-year-olds and 17% of 25–29-year-olds; by 2011 these rates had increased to 13% and 20% respectively.

These percentages do not reflect the great variability across EU member states ‘with rates varying from below 7% (Luxembourg and the Netherlands) to above 17% (Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy and Spain)’ (Mascherini, *et al.*, 2012: 1). Fig. 1 below reports statistical data across all EU countries showing the variability and the stage each country is at in addressing the issue.

1 The Lisbon Special European Council (March 2000): Towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge, available at http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/c10241_en.htm

2 Eurofound, NEET, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/neet.htm> accessed, 17. 11. 2013

3 Europe 2020, available from http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm, accessed 17.11.2013

4 Mascherini, *et al.* (2012) NEETs: Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe. Luxembourg: The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). Available from <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1254.htm>

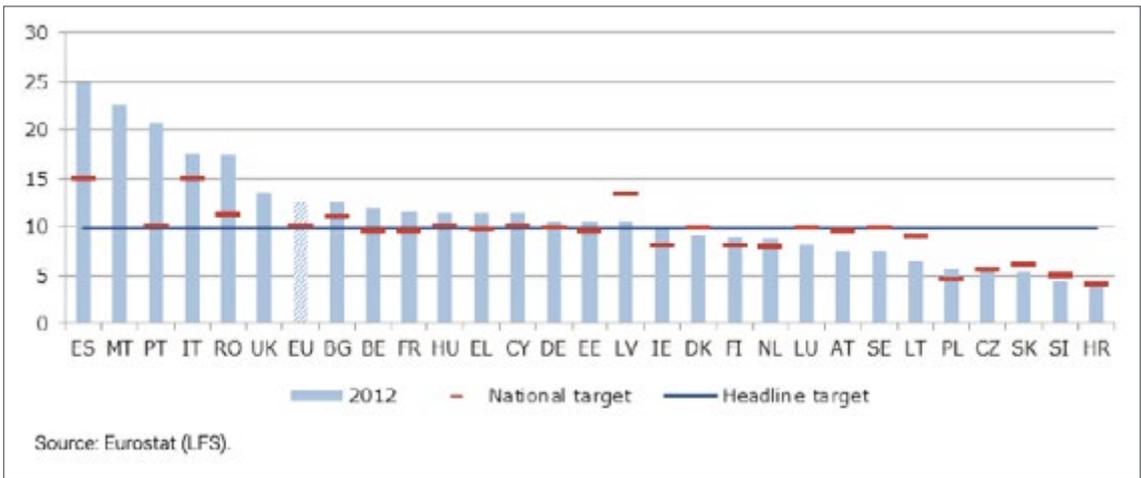


Fig. 1 ESL rate 2012, Europe 2020 target and national targets⁵

A more recent report titled *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support* (European Commission, 2013)⁶ reiterates the needs to tackle the problem. The report uses evidence-based policies to suggest that tackling the problem requires cross-sectorial cooperation at three interrelated levels: prevention, intervention and compensation.

The future of these young people is of great concern both in social and economic terms. Socially, young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds – although the composition of such a groups of young people is complex and varied- and suffer from multiple deprivations economic, social and cultural factors. In economic terms, their low qualifications and inactivity constitute a human and intellectual capital loss for themselves, their countries and the European Union as a whole. Figure 1 reports the percentage of ESL in the six countries which form the

SAS consortium. The data shows that only Slovenia has managed to meet the Europe 2020 target already.

⁵ European Commission (2012) European Semester 2012 – Thematic Fiche – 29 early school leaving. Brussels: EC, available http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/29_early_school_leaving.pdf

⁶ European Commission (2013) *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support*. Brussels: European Commission. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf

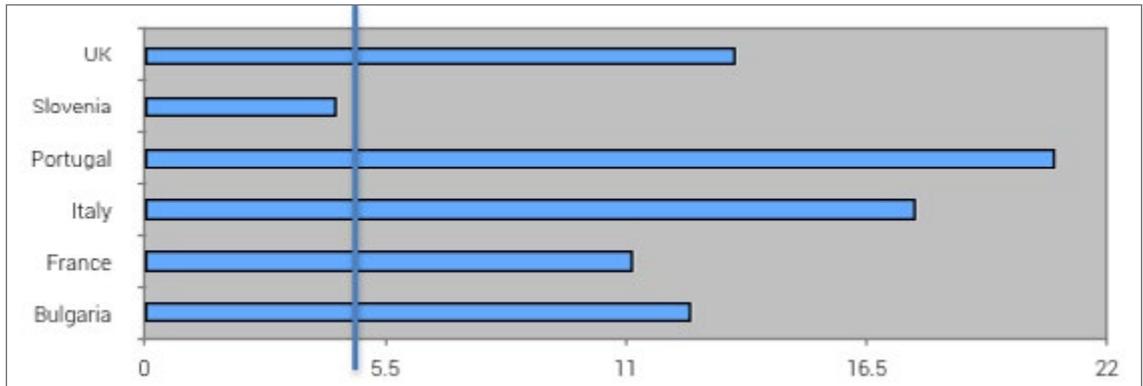


Fig.2 ESL percentages in the SAS consortium countries⁷

It is important to note, however, that the statistical data on ESL does not include the even more problematic task of providing evidence on those young people who are still in school but have disengaged and are at risk of leaving school, at present or in the future.

2. The Success at School project: thinking the impossible and making it happen through volunteering and mentoring

As the European Commission (2013) acknowledges, despite a number of initiatives part of Europe 2020 strategy, meeting the set targets remains challenging. Partly, this is due to the economic downturn, partly to a lack of political will, and partly to issues related to the inability of educational systems to accommodate the needs, abilities and aspirations of those young people who become disengaged and abandon school, or find it difficult to re-engage after leaving early with low qualifications.

The Success at School (SAS) project acknowledges that school failure is a major cause of social and professional exclusion among youngsters. Although the causes of school failure and ESL are many and complex, the partners in the project agreed that most of the time young people are dissatisfied by traditional teaching methods. Such methods, predicated on a standardized view of assessing the learning potential of our children and young people, create inequalities from within, thus casting some young people as failures. Perceived as already positioned outside the system of academic worth and value, such young people are forced to construct their identity within the limits of what they cannot achieve. For many being in school is an obligation which brings little relief. For others, being in school is a fictitious reality as they move in and out of the system. Finally, for migrant and asylum seeking children, school is not even an option.

⁷ For a complete set of statistical information, see the full set of EU data, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe_2020_indicators/headline_indicators

Somehow we do have knowledge and understanding of the causes and the solutions to the ESL problem. The EC report *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support* (EC, 2013) identifies a series of measures that can be adopted at the three levels of prevention, intervention and compensation, summarized in Table 1 below.

Prevention measures	Intervention measures	Compensation measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to good quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) • Relevant and engaging curriculum • Flexible educational pathways • Better integration of newly arrived migrant children • Smooth transition between different levels of education • High quality, attractive and engaging vocational education and training (VET) • Involvement of pupils and parents in school decision-making • Initial and continuous education for education staff • Whole school approaches • Strong and well-developed guidance system • Cooperation with the world of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Warning Systems (EWS) • Systemic support frameworks within schools • Focus on the needs of the individual pupil • Extra-curricular and out-of-school activities to enrich the learning offer • Support to teachers • Empower families and parents to support their children's education • Raise parental awareness of ESL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible and relevant second chance schemes • Recognition • Commitment and governance • Personalised and holistic approach to second chance education • A distinctive learning experience • Flexibility in the curricula • Teacher involvement and support • Links between second chance education and mainstream education

Table 1: Summary of prevention, intervention and compensation measures (EC, 2013: 18-24)

This book is evidence that the SAS approach of re-engaging young people in school through volunteering and mentoring addressed indicators for all three measures. In this sense the approach is holistic, innovative, meaningful and flexible enough to ensure that young people, teachers and the community in which they live provide support for each other in the holistic and cross-sectorial manner auspicated by the report.

In providing a solution to the seemingly impossible task of tackling ESL, the SAS team created a space of possibilities, which drew together academics, stakeholders (schools, associations, policy makers), and young people. They did this, as the book shows, by providing a bridge between formal and nonformal/informal education and showing how affording young people the opportunity to volunteer, they can re-gain motivation and self-confidence.

The main objective of the project was to develop and experiment an alternative pedagogical strategy, a 'detour' strategy, through volunteering and mentoring. Drawing from the French philosopher Philippe Meirieu, amongst many others, the SAS project was built on the idea that young people can be supported to re-engage with learning by affording them the opportunity to participate in other activities, beyond school, that would allow them to learn in a non-formal and informal way.

The SAS project has two related objectives:

- A **short-term** objective to develop a pedagogical strategy involving both youngsters as volunteers and mentees, and professionals, as mentors, to find a way back to school for early school leavers.
- A **long-term** objective to integrate this strategy in the curriculum of various schools, organisations, associations as the end users of our project.

Together with already available alternative methods, such as school mentoring, peer mentoring and tutoring, a voluntary experience would enable young people to learn and demonstrate the acquisition of valuable skills and competences useful to return to education and/or future employment. Within lifelong learning, volunteering is part of nonformal and informal learning enhanced by the Copenhagen process⁸. Through a variety of voluntary experiences, young people had the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge learned at school; enrich their social network; acquire or develop skills and competences; exchange good practices in learning; gain a sense of self based on success rather than failure, and therefore develop a positive image of themselves. Simultaneously, active participation in

8 EQAVET (2002) The Copenhagen Declaration, available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc125_en.pdf (accessed, 27 November 2013)

a voluntary association helped young people to gain eight key competences (European Council and the European Parliament, 2007⁹), specifically learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression. More in details, the combined training and practical voluntary experience afforded the young people the opportunity to learn:

- How to behave by respecting the rules of the host association/organization in which they volunteer
- Learn and develop professional skills of self-regulation and self-management
- How to behave in public, how to put an opinion forward and how to support one's ideas
- Learn to engage with and respect others and different points of view, and to
- Gain self-confidence and self-esteem thanks to concrete achieved actions.

3. The structure of the project: partnership and project design

European projects are very complex transdisciplinary, multicultural and complex enterprises. They bring together the knowledge and experience of colleagues across different countries, languages, systems and ways of working. Many times, the partners are known to the lead applicant, but have had not opportunity to know each other before the start of the project. Yet, all are united in working together for a fixed period of time for the sole purpose of making the project a success. The SAS team was no different.

The *Success at School* (SAS) project has been a collaborative effort of 7 partners in 6 European countries (see Fig. 2). 190 young people, aged 14-24, and 143 mentors took part in the experimentation of the alternative pedagogical strategy.

⁹ European Communities (2007) Key competences for Lifelong Learning. European Reference Framework. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007



Figure 3 Partners in the SAS consortium

The partners comprised both academic and non academic institutions or associations. More in details:

- » **The University of Northampton** (www.northampton.ac.uk), (UK) is a modern university providing both undergraduate and post graduate education for approximately ten thousand students spread out between two campuses. The University is a focal point in the UK landscape for Social Enterprise, and the only AshokaU, Changemaker campus in the UK whose principles are: empathy, initiative, team work, innovation, transformation and positive social change. The Centre for Special Needs Education Research¹⁰ (CeSNER), from which the researchers are drawn, has a well-established record of conducting research at both national and international levels on topics related to inclusion and the education of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- » **ASSFAM** (<http://www.assfam.org>) (France) has aided immigrant families and youth for sixty years since 1951, in different areas. The association works with secondary schools in rundown neighborhoods where the number of youngsters

¹⁰ CeSNER, <http://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/academic-schools/school-of-education/research-in-the-school-of-education>

excluded from the school system is high. It uses recreational ways of teaching (jeu Distinct'go), which plays a role in introducing themes such as citizenship, combating discrimination, and the equality of opportunities between men and women. ASSFAM is a specialist in intercultural approach and by its commitment with migrant and young people has developed a broad and diverse network of partners.

- » The **Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv)** (<http://www.iriv.net/>) (France) is a not-for-profit and independent private institution, with the aim to enrich the public debate and inform on lifelong learning issues and especially on volunteering as an example of non formal and informal learning. Iriv conseil has been coordinator or partner in many European projects in the field of lifelong learning, such as: Volunteering: Assessing a Voluntary experience – Vaeb- www.eEuropeassociations.net; Valuing experience Beyond University – VAB- www.vab-univ.eu; Migrapass- www.migrapass.net; supporting professional working with migrants (TIPS – www.forcom.it/tips; Valuing Prior Learning – VPL2; All in Higher Education-ALLInHE, Erasmus,
- » The **University of Bologna (UNIBO)** (www.unibo.it) (Italy) is the oldest university in the western world and one of the top universities in Italy – ranked second for competitive research funding - with 11 Schools, 33 research departments as well as 5 operating branches. The Department Education Studies “G. M. Bertin” is one of the pioneers of the field worldwide, with over 30 years experience, both in the field of research and counselling, within key-areas that are currently at the forefront of policy-making research, such as early childhood education, inclusion of special needs children in integrated settings and inter-cultural pedagogy. The Department includes nowadays 28 professors and 45 researchers belonging to four subject areas: Cultural Anthropology, Pedagogy, Psychology, Sociology and Humanities Studies. At present, the Department of the Education Studies is involved in various projects – both at national and European level – ALFA III Programme, LLL Programme, Tempus IV and FP7 programmes. The Department is Editorial Office and Board for the international journals ‘Journal of Theories and Research in Education’,
- » **CERMES** (www.cermes.info) is an academic centre within the New Bulgarian University, which is specialized in research, training and civic activities in the field of migration studies built around a team of senior researchers and PhD candidates. The Centre organizes conferences and round tables on a regular basis to promote public consciousness on refugees, immigrant and minority rights, as well as awareness on migration and asylum issues. CERMES participates in numerous national and international projects; until last year it was in partnership with Sofia Municipality for the big international project “Open cities”. More recently, CERMES participated in an

international consortium working on the project Migrapass (2010-2012). Members of the research group also lead one big national project, "E-citizenship".

- » The **Ergo Institute** (www.ergo-institut.com/) is a Slovenian private research organization and consulting company which transfers scientific findings on cultures into companies and other organisations. Its staff believes that all organisations should emphasise user-friendly products and services that can only be discovered through the analysis of social groups and their cultures. Its aim is to boost the added value of institutions through solutions that pay regard to user experience, intercultural cooperation, cultural specifics and adaptation of services to cultural environments. By providing consulting and trainings on intercultural cooperation, Ergo Institute helps to overcome cultural problems and create a unified way of thinking, living and working in organisations, at the same time keeping them open for innovation and a variety of opinions. Ergo Institute had an active role in trainings of intercultural cooperation, and it lately organized several scientific and professional events (e.g. professional conference "Business without borders: A role of anthropology in intercultural business cooperation" – Ljubljana, 2011; workshop on crossing intercultural differences at the international conference "The future of training and consulting for young European SMEs" – Warsaw, Poland, 2011; professional conference "Telematics Conference SEEurope" – Belgrade, 2011). Ergo Institute is also constantly present in Slovenian media. Articles about the organization and its members appear in journals "Manager", "GEA Forum" and "MQ" and the team also regularly cooperates with national broadcasting radio-station "Radio Slovenia".
- » Established in 1985, **CIES-IUL** (www.cies.iscte.pt) is a research unit belonging to ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon and, more specifically, its School of Sociology and Public Policies (ESPP, in Portuguese). It is accredited by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and has been classified as "excellent" in the international evaluations regularly carried out on an external basis by the FCT. The centre's general aims are to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the development of society. Its strategic guiding principles are scientific quality, social relevance and internationalisation. In association with ESPP, CIES-IUL offers PhDs in sociology, public policy, communication sciences and social services. Its team of 217 members includes 73 researchers, 24 associate researchers and 120 research assistants. A quarter of the researchers are foreign: in all, they represent 15 nationalities. CIES-IUL carries out basic research projects in the fields of sociology, political science, education, communication sciences and urban anthropology. The projects are funded on the basis of scientifically evaluated open competitions sponsored by Portuguese and European agencies or foundations.

In order to facilitate the management of the project and the effective collaboration amongst all 7 partners, the project was divided in 7 Workpackages (WP). They were:

- **WP1 - Project management, administration and finance** – University of Northampton, UK - The management and administration of the project, including the collection of all financial data, contracts and bilateral contracts, coordination of the work amongst the partners, commissioning project website, and writing the interim and final reports.
- **WP2 - Pedagogical method – training course** – IRIV, France - The development of the detour strategy, specifically the development of a module on volunteering.
- **WP3 - Mentoring training** – University of Northampton, UK and Assfam, France - The development of the mentoring training
- **WP4 - Experimentation of the pedagogical method and mentoring**, UNIBO, Italy - The design and coordination of the experimentation of the pedagogical method and the mentoring training
- **WP5 - Exploitation of the results**, ERGO Institut, Slovenia - Wp5 is responsible for creating a network of stakeholders; organising national advisory groups in each of the 6 countries.
- **WP6 - Dissemination**, CERMES, Bulgaria - The development of the project website (www.successatschool.eu); production of leaflets about the project and translation in the 6 national languages; supporting the publication of the e-book and other forms of dissemination (i.e. conference papers, journal articles).
- **WP7 - Evaluation**, CIES-IUL, Portugal - Design of the internal and project evaluation for the purpose of quality assurance.

The approach taken to develop, experiment and exploit the results of the combined pedagogical detour strategy and the mentoring was a bottom-up constructivist and collaborative approach. For this reason, at different stages in the life of the project, a number of participants were involved. The participants the project will work with are:

- The young people
- Mentors

- The schools, teachers, or other professionals with a primary responsibility for the education of the young people
- Stakeholders and advisory groups
- Local and national volunteering associations

Fig. 4 below provides an overview of how the 7 workpackages worked together.

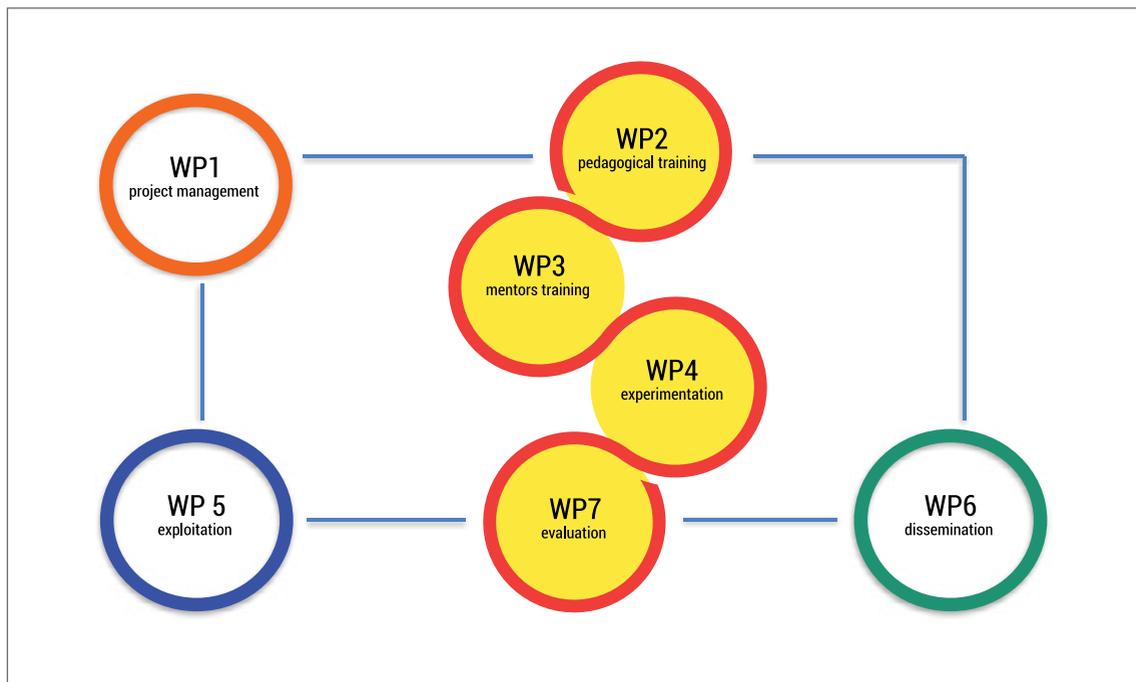


Fig. 4: SAS project overview: Workpackages (source: Bramble, Devecchi and Brown, 2014)¹¹

Given the great variation in relation to the percentages of ESL, and the nature of the causes and approaches taken in each one of the six countries, together with the generic and individual profiles of the young people, the project takes an approach, which is sensitive to country specific differences, needs and strengths. Therefore, the volunteering training course and mentoring were further adapted to suit each context so as to take into account the personal and professional experience of the mentors, and the needs of the young people. Both aspect of the pedagogical training proved to be structured enough to provide

¹¹ Bramble, P. Devecchi, C. and Brown, J. (2014) Shaping the Future of Educational Research: Collaboration between Academics and Project Managers. Presented at the ECER conference, University of Porto, Portugal, 1-5 September 2014

a common framework while also allowing for the needed flexibility of implementation.

Some examples of variations, which impacted on the nature of the training were:

- The nature of the educational system in each country, including pedagogical and curricular structures
- Degree of existing volunteering and mentoring programmes, including individual mentors' knowledge and experience
- Variations in the young people population, their characteristics, motivation and ideas about the volunteering activities which were meaningful to them
- Variations in the access to young people in schools impacting on the recruitment and participation of young people
- Composition of stakeholders and advisory groups and the impact of their suggestions and recommendations on the experimentation.
- Being mindful of such variations, the SAS partners developed and modified as necessary the pedagogical method- training course (Wp2) and the mentoring training (Wp3) to suit their circumstances. However, some core aspects were retained and they were:
 - Training sessions were held in each country for both young people and their mentors.
 - The teaching strategies varied depending on the needs, age and interests of the group of young people. In some instances training and volunteering activities were combined through a 'learning by doing' approach as this suited some young people.
 - Evidence of the effectiveness of involving young people in volunteering experience was collected during and after the experimentation period. Methods of data collection were questionnaires, testimonies from both the young people and their mentors, but also teachers and youth workers; weblogs, facebook, together with a more quantitative matrix identifying core indicators.

A pivotal part of the project was the dissemination and the exploitation strategies. During the lifespan of the project partners engaged with over 200 stakeholders in a series of meetings held in each country with three types of stakeholders:

- **National stakeholders** – those who may be interested but not involved in the project.
- **Strategic stakeholders** – those who are important to stay involved with and have a strategic role to play. They may be involved at some of the stakeholder meetings but do not play a regular role.
- **Key stakeholders** – those who are actively involved in the experimentation, i.e. schools and associations.

This solution enabled partners to include a greater number of stakeholders and ensure positive and long-lasting relationships with them through national, local and bespoke meetings. The meetings served to disseminate the project, seek the stakeholders' views and comments about the nature and feasibility of the project, and recruit both young people and mentors, while also enabling partners to find associations interested in providing volunteering opportunities to the young people.

4. The structure of the book

This book is the result of the cooperation of over 20 researchers. Its aim is of providing others with the knowledge of how to re-engage young people with school and education. The book does this by disseminating the work of the partners, their success, the challenges they encountered and the solutions they implemented in an accessible language and format. For this reason the book comprises 14 chapters divided in two parts. Part I entitled *The Success at School Project: the theory* details the various components of the project. In this part are chapters that deal with innovation in project management; the theory behind the development of the volunteering training and practice; the theory and practice of mentoring; the development and practice of the experimentation through the mentoring and volunteering activities; the theory and approach taken in developing the dissemination strategy; the management and outcomes of the engagement with stakeholders; and the development and implementation of the project evaluation. Part II, entitled *The Success at School: the practice*, reports on the 7 national case studies. Each chapter starts with an introduction of the national situation of early school leaving in order to locate the way in which each partner developed and implemented the volunteering and mentoring training and implemented the volunteering activities. Each chapter also offers a detail of the challenges encountered and solutions proposed with a view to help others to be successful in their effort to help young people to succeed in school.

PART I: THE SUCCESS
AT SCHOOL PROJECT
THE THEORY

CHAPTER 2:

Business as usual: Project management of a European Project

Paul Bramble, University of Northampton

Introduction

As projects become more complex in terms of methodologies and technologies, distant and international partnerships, and in relation to the need to engage with stakeholders and the public, the traditional academic-only management style is necessary but not sufficient any longer. It is becoming apparent under the European Commission's new Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes that excellence in research management; the nature of the partnership, and the expertise it brings in the area of dissemination and sustainability (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2014) are key drivers for any organisation applying for funding. To accomplish all such expectations, effective project management, that is the, planning, monitoring, assigning and controlling of all aspects of a project, is essential. Based on the Success at School project's experience, this chapter argues that the presence of an experienced project/research manager is needed, but that, as the nature of the projects change, there is also a need to move beyond traditional lines of professional demarcation between academics and administrative support roles.

The nature of a European project is complex since, for example, it comprises a temporary team of people who are characterised by a group consciousness, a definable membership,

a sense of collective purpose, interdependence and the ability to act as single entity (Mullins, 2005), but, in many respects, this is a group that develops its identity as the projects unfolds. These combined aspects require the project manager, traditionally in an academic environment the Principal Investigator (PI), to keep all those involved in the project motivated so as to deliver the project objectives within a designated timescale while maintaining the projects performance targets for costs, risks, time, quality and benefits (Hinde, 2012). Whilst there is no dearth of literature on how to manage a project, much of what is written about project management is from a private sector perspective. Although, as it will be argued in this chapter, many of the principles still apply, the literature from the Higher Education (HE) sector is far from abundant.

This chapter, through the use of the PRINCE2 model, explores how the role of project management (PM) is 'unitised' within an EU commissioned project in relation to how the role of the project manager developed parallel to and in support of the role of the Project Leader in the Success at School (SAS) project (www.successatschool.eu). The chapter is written as the personal professional reflection of having being involved as a project manager. Starting with a contextualisation of the changing environment in research and Higher Education, the chapter explores the way in which project management can be beneficial to a project. It then reflects on the development of the role of project manager by showing how, at the University of Northampton in the UK, we approached this change through the collaboration between academics and project manager, and how this role developed throughout the lifespan of the project. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection on the role of a project manager by looking at elements such as Co-ordination, administration and impact within the management of the SAS project.

The importance of project management and the future of EU commissioned work

In a changed and highly competitive research context, funding bodies are more careful in awarding projects. Some of the selection criteria used are an increased focus on cooperation across social sectors, trans-disciplinarily, and social impact. The European Union's new EU Erasmus+ programme, for example, launched in Spring 2014 to support the actions, cooperation and objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy states,

'Erasmus+ aims at going beyond these programmes, by promoting synergies and cross-fertilisation throughout the different fields of education, training and youth, removing artificial boundaries between the various Actions and project formats, fostering new ideas, attracting new actors from the world of work and civil society and stimulating new forms of cooperation.' (Erasmus+ Programme guide, 2014, p.10).

Clearly, to achieve all the above goals requires carrying out a complex set of interactions in an effective and efficient manner. As the European funding bodies look for excellence in management to deliver successful partnerships, a key driver for any organisation applying for funding in this changing environment is the presence of an experienced project manager (Erasmus+ Programme guide, 2014 & Horizon 2020 Work Programme, 2013).

Simultaneously, universities, both in the UK and in Europe more broadly, are going through a series of major changes to their corporate identity in terms not only of their goals and mission, but also in relation to the composition of their stakeholders. As Córcoles (2013) suggests, universities in Europe are faced with the following challenges:

- Increased competition regarding teaching and research with other organisations, either private or universities, while, at the same time, need for harmonization across the European Union;
- The increasing level of the internationalization of education and research.
- Implementations of new research modes of delivery, but also competition with private research providers.
- Increased demand for transparency and accountability about the “results” and “benefits” derived from the public funds.

This, as Petford (2013) suggests, requires universities to become more competitive in the global marketplace, not just in terms of securing students but also in relation to innovation in enterprise and research.

In such an environment the penalties of failing to adapt to change become more evident, the focus of management attention is inevitably moving to achieve a balance between ‘business as usual’ and business change (Office of Government Commerce, 2009). Barber et al.’s (2013) report *An Avalanche is Coming: Higher education and the revolution ahead* describe the need for a radical and urgent transformation of higher education. In terms of research, the issue is more about the changing nature of research projects which Langley (2012) describes as characterised by “the increasing complexity of research funding, which is often larger in scale, milestone driven, multi-partner, multi-discipline, required to demonstrate impact, and subject to more audit, and arguably, greater governance and bureaucracy” (Langley, 2012, p.71).

It is in this challenging and fast changing research context that the role of Research Management and Administration (RMA) become key in delivering the projects successfully.

This is neither to suggest that project research managers, traditionally located within the administrative body of a university, could or should replace academics nor does it suggest to view the progress and survival of higher education as requiring to surrender itself to private sector principles (Guardian Professional, 2014). It is to suggest that the support of a project manager can be of benefit. However, to be beneficial the project manager has to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the project as an investment and make sure that what the project delivers is consistent with achieving the desired return (Office of Government Commerce, 2009). To achieve the above, the SAS project combined the knowledge, skills and competences of both the project leader and the project manager (Bramble et al., 2014) since the research management function provided a range of skills and knowledge (including costing skills and negotiation skills, through to specialist knowledge of EU and other funders, Intellectual Property, commercialisation) (Green and Langley, 2009), while the project leader, or PI function provided the academic to set the goals, mission and overall strategy.

Another important reason why the role of project manager is becoming more important lies in the language shift used at Erasmus+ coordinators meetings in Brussels. While to start with it was focused on dissemination and finance related topics, now it centres on quality, impact and sustainability, and project dissemination (technology - social media based web strategies). In this regard, Lock (2013) suggests that project managers in the age of technology could be described as specialists, thus, indicating the need for a more specialist role within a research project, one which a project manager can fulfil.

An appreciation of project management

As already mentioned in other chapters, the Success at School project was the result of the collaboration of seven partners in six European countries, around 20 team members in all. Each partner was responsible for one Workpackage, and each Workpackage included a number of deliverables with deadlines across the two-year period. Work package 1 (WP1), led by the University of Northampton, was responsible for the management of the project in all its aspects, therefore including ensuring timely delivery of targets, finance, overall direction of the project, collaboration between partners, etc. So as to accomplish all its tasks, WP1 comprised two academics working as project leader and researcher respectively, and a colleague from the School of Education administrative staff. This section focuses on the development of the role of the latter, which developed, as the project unfolded, into a project management (PM) role alongside that of the project leader.

In reflecting on how the PM role developed, it is necessary to explain the Prince2 (Projects IN Controlled Environments) management model which was used. Although Prince2 is a

fundamental tool when undertaking any project from its conception to its delivery, and while we acknowledge that the mechanisms are business orientated (Great Britain, Office of Government Commerce, 2009), they can be applied to any research project.

As a way of explanation, there are four levels of management, all separate, but reporting to one another. The corporate or programme management level comprises those who commission the project, while the Project Board sets the direction of the project through the support of: the executive, who is responsible for the project; the senior user represents the interests of those who will benefit from the project outputs; and the senior supplier is responsible for the quality of the products and the integrity of the project. The board also sits within the project management team, which consists of the project manager and the team manager. The project manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the operations set out by the board while the team managers are responsible for the delivery of the outputs, which vary depending on the size and purpose of the project.

One limitation of the PRINCE2 process within the context of a research funded projects is its transferability since it does not sit neatly in an academic context. However, it provides a structured approach and a workflow process for project managers with regards to the control of costs, timescales, quality, scope, risk and benefits. More importantly, it provides a process model (see example <https://www.prince2.com/sites/default/files/prince2-process-model.gif>) of all activities within a project, from setting up a project, directing a project, controlling a stage, managing a product delivery/stage boundary to closing the project.

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) provided support material and workshops for co-ordinators through practical guidelines for Life Long Learning (LLP), which included a successful project start up, LLP administrative and financial rules and management (EACEA, 2009). More recently, support has been delivered through the Guidelines for Administrative and Financial Management and Reporting (EACEA, 2012), which includes a project handbook, reporting templates and contractual documents. However, EACEA documentation also states that these are guidelines and an informal checklist only (EACEA, 2009; 2012). This raises a number of questions. First, it raises the question as to what extent the project leader responsible for co-coordinating a project requires knowledge of the rules and regulations set by the EACEA. Second, it raises the question of what being a successful project manager is and whether the roles of project manager and project leader are the same, or can be shared.

Mindful of the above mentioned challenges, the project management and project manager's identity within the SAS project was adapted as shown in Fig 1 below.

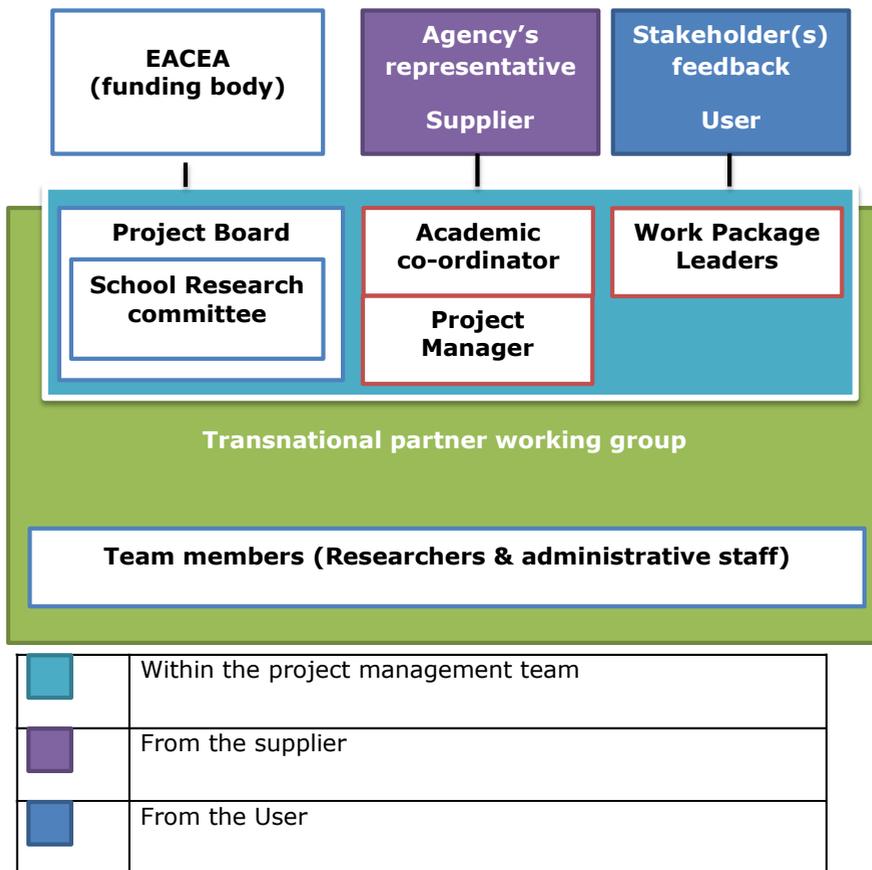


Fig. 1 – A representation of project management structure for the SAS project

Although there are similarities between the organograms in Fig 1 and Fig. 3, due to the specific nature of funded research, the SAS project is constructed in a very different way. The 'Corporate or Programme Management' is EACEA, the funding body, which still sits outside the project team. It commissions the projects, set tolerances (mainly financial), but it does not identify an executive leader or determines the project board as this is down to the lead applicant of the bid to set up the management team, partner organisations, work packages and financials. Ultimately, the EACEA approves or rejects the work packages, timescale and finances that are submitted by the lead applicant. As project leader, our University research boards (6 meetings an academic year) are kept up to date with the current progress of the project. In terms of the PRINCE2 process this aspect is the Pre-project stage, where the project proposal is justified against business objectives and competitive pressures.

The project management team is an interesting construction; the Senior User and Supplier (Agency representative) are outside the project board, but they directly interface with the management team. The project management team comprises the project board. The academic co-ordinator, or project leader, is accountable for decision-making and ultimately for the success or failure of the project, although issues around the direction of the project are a shared responsibility with the team members, in this case the work package leaders representing each partner organisation in the consortium. Given the nature of the work being undertaken, these tend to be academics although in the SAS project not all work package leaders were academics.

In regard to the way in which the SAS project developed, the major changes occurred in relation to the collaboration between the project manager and the academic co-ordinator, or project leader, as it will be explored in more details later in this chapter.

Reflection on 'my' role and identity as a project manager

This section is written from my personal point of view of working on the SAS project as a project manager. The first lesson learnt through the two years is that no matter what the extent of one's experience of working at European projects or project management is, one is always learning new skills while facing both the usual but also new challenges as they occur. In explaining which challenges had to be faced in the SAS project, but also how the team found solutions and what role project management had, we can use Bienzle, et al.'s (2010) list of factors relevant for when undertaking a work on multilateral project.

Coordination and leadership – Traditionally, the responsibility of coordinating and leading a project rests with the Principal Investigator (PI) who is usually an academic. In terms of co-ordination the SAS project took a different approach whereby the project manager worked alongside the academic leader. This was to achieve a more business focussed 'strategic' approach to the research project and deliver more effectively on the work packages and on impact. Keeping the traditional aspects of project management, planning and dissemination alongside a more interactive and flexible approach, more commonly known as agile project management, and more commonly found in IT and engineering sector projects. Throughout this project both the Project Manager and the project Lead Academic co-ordinator have supported each other and took on a number of leadership roles to suit the circumstances. Therefore, the set of skills and competences each one brought to the project, included being a motivator, a good communicator, understanding different cultures, building a strong team and resolving conflicts in a constructive way. In this regard, knowledge between the project manager and the lead academic was shared and built upon horizontal rather than vertical hierarchical structures (Devecchi, 2007). In

so doing, the nature of the collaboration was developed within what Whitchurch (2013) identified as the 'third space'.

Planning - As with all multilateral projects the work was split into work packages and can be displayed via a GANTT diagram. In ensuring the success of the project, it is essential that all partners, whether WP leaders or researchers, are aware of the timescale, tasks to be fulfilled, expected results and more. In reality, the planning and implementation of the project was a little more problematic, but not surprising given the complex nature of multilateral and transnational projects. Given the practical nature of the experimentation, the implementation of the pedagogical proposal required more in-depth and flexible planning, exemplified by the key concept I used with colleagues of 'adapt and adopt'. This pragmatic approach meant that we were continually refining the processes and implementing the changes into each work package as changes occurred throughout the life of the project, such as staff turnover, access to schools and young people, recruitment, training and retention of mentors and young people, and the commitment and participation of stakeholders. In this respect the project manager supported the successful implementation of the project plan by reminding partners about their roles and responsibilities, ensuring communication and discussing with the project leader alternative strategic and operational measures.

Administration – The contractual aspects of EU projects like the SAS project are to be found in the Guidelines for Administrative and Financial Management and Reporting (EACEA, 2012). For the SAS project the additional administrative paperwork was something not to be taken lightly. In this context, the main role of the project manager was to communicate effectively the nature of the financial requirements and the submission deadlines. In order to do this, the project manager was responsible for setting up all the project documentation, from the financial reporting to the project plan review documents (in conjunction with partners), and setting up instruments to manage the risk, communication and dissemination strategies. The use of a personal daily log, which noted down the projects activities and reflected on their outcomes, whether positive or negative, was very useful as it provided a lessons learnt report or a great reflective tool which when bidding or working on other projects.

Cooperation and collaboration – The effectiveness of a European project is also judged in relation to whether the consortium of partners managed to work collaboratively and to what extent each partner contributed to the overall success of the project measured in regard to meeting the project proposed goals and outcomes. In addressing this point, we make use of McGregor's (1985) work, which summarised the feature of effective teams as follows:

- Informal, comfortable and relaxed atmosphere

- Group participation at every level
- There is disagreement in the group but this is viewed as good
- Criticism is frequent, frank and relatively comfortable
- Clear tasks set
- Team leader does not overshadow the discussion.
- Listening to each point of view
- The objectives are understood and accepted by all the team

An interesting and no less challenging aspect of any multilateral project is how diverse the team is, in terms of culture, language, different organisational backgrounds (i.e. universities and NGOs in this projects case), and their experience, expertise and expectations.

Teamwork can result in numerous positive benefits such as an increase in the expertise of the team members, an improvement of working processes through drawing on different skills and strengths, as well as increased creativity and collaboration. However, it can lead to higher work pressure in some instances (for example, in lean production) (Eurofound, 2012).

Good teamwork or collaboration, therefore, needs to take into consideration the fact that individuals and organisations bring with them their own agenda, whether this is made explicit or it is implicitly held. Such an agenda is made up of a combination of aspects including personal and organisational interests, and pressures, such as financial or teaching priorities. To ensure that all partners feel included, it is very important that all are willing and enabled to learn from each other and have mutual respect for what every partner brings to a project of this nature, and have shared ownership and vision. In order to maintain a good collaboration and partnership, the work package leaders and the project managers helped each other to review the ongoing progress of the project, reminding each other of deadlines. This form of knowledge management contributed to maintaining the flow of communication across the project partnership.

Intercultural - With regard to issues related to the inter-cultural dimension, a phrase, which I found useful to portray some of the misunderstandings was 'lost in translation'. This refers to those instances when the use of terminology, language and non-verbal behaviour can be misinterpreted and can slow the project down. Projects like the SAS are intercultural

in nature and therefore understanding people's characteristics and behaviour can be at times difficult, but with patience and understanding any difficulties can be resolved.

The iceberg model of culture (Hall, 1976) can be a useful tool in these circumstances, where it shows characteristics of the culture of a society are visible, above water (behaviour and some beliefs), but mostly they are invisible, below the water (some beliefs, values and thought patterns). The iceberg model of culture indicates that everyone has preconceptions of cultures and this in turn initially can be difficult to work collaboratively at the start of any project. "However, anyone can develop some intercultural competence by becoming aware of the influences culture has on our own behaviour and on the behaviour of others, as well as by paying special attention to interaction situations taking place in an intercultural setting" (Bienzle et al., 2010, p.77).

Virtual/ICT ways of working – Given the importance of virtual and online means of communication and dissemination, it is not a surprise that EU projects require the setting up of such means. However, the use of technology in whatever format can be problematic. According to Perumal and Bakar (2011, p.93) "Advancement of technology could motivate project teams in terms of communication, team work and work efficiency. Adopting new technologies is crucial to sustained competitiveness for many organizations". For this project we used a range of technologies, such as, email, Dropbox, Skype, WordPress, LinkedIn, Facebook besides traditional Microsoft software.

While the use of technology can be a means of making projects more efficient, this works only if all partners have knowledge and experience of the software and of the social media to be used. For example, at the first kick-off meeting, the partners completed an information sheet, requiring their name, telephone number, email address and Skype name. Although Skype has become a widely-spread tool for communication, for some partners on the project it was new. Effective collaboration, therefore, also involves the project manager to be able to understand and support partners through the use of various pieces of technology. The role of the project manager, in this case, involves that of a teacher, but also a technician who ensures that everyone accesses the information securely and that data is backed up. While the SAS project did not make use of all possible virtual means, it is useful to consider the use of productivity tools, such as: workflow software; web-conferencing applications; Customer Management Service software (CMS) and other blogging applications.

Quality assurance - Quality is important in any project and particularly funded projects as the funding body needs to be reassured that the money was spent efficiently and effectively. More strictly in research terms, quality also includes the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings, and the impact the research has had on the stakeholders and users. Quality,

transparency and accountability are key factors that all EU commission projects strive for and the SAS project is no different. Although Workpackage 7, led by CIES-IUL in Portugal, was responsible for the overall evaluation of the project, the project leader and project manager ensured that there was a consensual agreement on the methodology to be used, monitored the experimentation and data collection, ensured timely delivery of quality outputs, and supported the development of the overall evaluation.

Impact evaluation - European co-financed projects place significant importance on impact and sustainability. EACEA is keen to see the results of projects to the widest possible audience and entwined with this is dissemination and exploitation to help maximise the impact. In order to be successful it is of importance that the SAS project results needs to be spread and embedded and the EACEA regards

'the twin activities of dissemination and exploitation, also known together as valorisation. Their key objective is to maximise the impact of project results by optimising their value, strengthening their impact, transferring them to different contexts, integrating them in a sustainable way and using them actively in systems and practices at local, regional, national and European levels' (EACEA Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2007, p.20).

Despite much academic debate on its nature, impact should be quantifiable, reportable and/or make a difference on people's lives. In relation to the SAS project we ensured impact throughout stakeholders' meetings, our mentors who engaged with schools and more importantly the young people. Other impact results were the on schools, organisations, teachers and policy makers across the 6 partner countries and 7 organisations. As impact is a very important measure of the quality of the project, the role of the project manager is pivotal in ensuring that, in collaboration with the project leader, they develop a clear strategy and an efficient operational plan. Having an agreed focus and shared responsibility was very important because an innovative European project like the SAS project required excellent internal and external communication with partners' institutions, partners' stakeholders, policy/decision makers and the general public.

Conclusion

The external environment has changed and has become highly competitive. In turn funding bodies are being more selective of who is granted their money. This has seen universities in the UK and in part across Europe adapting their goals and missions, redefining internally the expectations and behaviours of employees to generate income. This new 'business-like' way of working under increased economic pressure to deliver income, sits

uncomfortably against a long-standing tradition of research. To be successful in gaining funding grants to delivering a project requires expertise in this stimulating and unwavering research environment that the role of Research Management and Administration (RMA) has become a key part in delivering projects successfully.

The experience gained throughout the SAS project, however, shows that the presence of a project manager is not necessarily successful unless other factors are taken into consideration. The first and most important factor is that of creating a partnership between project managers, usually located within the administration, and the project leader and research partners, usually located in the space of academia. The ability to break down such professional boundaries affords benefits to both. From the perspective of the lead researcher, the administrative and management support is invaluable. Yet, the quality of that support depends on the extent to which the project leader is willing and able to share with the project manager the mission, goal and vision of the research to be undertaken. From a project manager's point of view the opportunity to gain a more in depth knowledge of the nature of the project enables him or her to provide more targeted support when needed. In so doing, project leader and research partners and project managers blur some of their roles while enhancing others to the benefits not only of the quality of the final outcome, but also to the benefits of the end users and stakeholders.

In conclusion, a project manager has an important role in providing a rewarding funded project that trans-disciplinarily builds cooperation across sectors and delivers and social impact. The chapter asked the question of 'business as usual', thus drawing attention to the present problematic relationship between the role of academics within a changing environment which is becoming progressively more 'business-like'. The way the project management developed throughout the SAS project shows that it is possible to act in a business manner without losing or compromising the nature and quality of academic research. Yet for this to happen, the project manager and the lead academic (and by extension the other academic partners) need to re-configure their roles and professional identities. In doing so, they construct a team which is not defined by traditional power structures cast within hierarchical roles, but make use of the knowledge within the team in a pragmatic, flexible and purposive way. Through a process of democratisation of knowledge, the role of the project manager borders with and, at times, trespasses into the territory of academia. Yet, such a move is to be welcome so as to ensure the project's success and future sustainability.

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CHAPTER 3:

Volunteering- an alternative pedagogical strategy to combat Early School Leaving: The added value of the Success at School project

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Introduction

The Success at School through Volunteering project (SAS) is a Comenius project implemented through the framework of the Lifelong Learning programme in a secondary school context. Its aim is to design an alternative training approach that combines volunteering and mentoring to support young people facing difficulties at school. The two main audiences/stakeholders of the SAS are young people between 14 to 20 years of age and educators, understood in a broad sense of teachers, social workers, and any professional or volunteer working with youngsters in the field of education.

In this chapter we will focus on the pedagogical approach, and more specifically the volunteer training offered to youngsters. After first reviewing the nature of volunteering in the national and European contexts, we will then explain the pedagogical strategy implemented through the SAS training programme. This will be followed by a section listing, explaining, detailing the school and workplace related skills and competences to be

acquired by youngsters in relation to the key competences to be acquired and developed by European citizens (EU, 2006).

The educational input and innovation of the Success at School project is to show how a voluntary experience for youngsters might support the acquisition of skills and competences as a pupil (at school), as a future worker (on the labour market), but also as a citizen (in society). As a result, the volunteering approach developed by the SAS team might be used by educators as an alternative approach to re-engage in education for pupils at risk of leaving school early.

1. Volunteering in European and national contexts (macro-level approach) - the SAS environment

The European Year of Volunteering in 2011 (YEV, 2011) provided a new step towards the recognition of volunteering as a non-formal and informal approach to learning. The final publication of the European Commission, published at the end of the YEV 2011, states that,

“Volunteering is a creator of human and social capital. It is a pathway to integration and employment and a key factor for improving social cohesion. Above all, volunteering translates the fundamental values of justice, solidarity, inclusion and citizenship upon which Europe is funded into action.”

This section provides an examination of how volunteering is conceived and defined and offers examples of best practice across a number of European countries.

1.1 Definition of volunteering

Depending on the languages, there are many different terms used for volunteering. In English the term is relatively straightforward, although there are still quite different views about what volunteering encompasses. therefore there are still many different meanings connected with the word (Halba, *et al.*, 2001).¹

Generally, definitions of volunteering refer to five dimensions² (Halba, 2003):

- The activity must be carried out of one's own free choice (*idea of freedom*),

¹ Halba (B), Struempel (C) and Schumacher (J), *Curriculum for a continuous professional training program "Promotion and facilitation of Voluntary Work"*, Francfort, Paris, Wien, May 2001.

² Halba (B), *Bénévolat et volontariat en France et dans le monde*, La Documentation française, Paris, 2003.

- It is unremunerated (*idea of gratuity, disinterest*),
- It must not only be for the benefit of the individual or his/her family; it is a “gift to strangers” (*idea of altruism, otherness*)
- It usually takes place in an organized or formal frame (*in a not-for-profit organization*)
- The action is for the general purpose and not for the interest of a small group of people (*idea of general good/general purpose*)

It is important to stress that a voluntary activity that takes place in an isolated, sporadic or individual way, outside the framework of public or private non-profit organisations, or motivated by family relations or friendship, is expressively excluded from this concept of voluntary work³.

Helmut K. Anheier (2005)⁴, principally in reference to the United States, maintains that volunteering is “the donation of time for a wide range of community and public benefit purposes, such as helping the needy, distributing food, serving on boards, visiting the sick or cleaning up local parks”.

In France, for example, there are two words for volunteering: “*bénévolat*” and “*volontariat*” (Halba, 2003)⁵. They both include the five dimensions given in the general definition above (free activity, non remuneration, for others, for the general good, through a formal frame). The difference between “*bénévolat*” and “*volontariat*” lies in the full-time activity of the “*volontariat*” and the status attached to it, which allows some remuneration (though not as a salary). There are five “kinds” of volunteers: international volunteers (in international NGOs, Act of 2005), firemen volunteers -as opposed to professional ones- Act of 1996), volunteers abroad (generally in French firms or in embassies), volunteers in France (any age, since 2006), civil service volunteers (18-25 years, with a National Agency created in 2006) very close in the spirit to the European Voluntary Service (EVS) operating in the EU since 1996.

1.2 Institutional background in Europe (European Year of Volunteering 2011) and some national examples of best practice in the field of volunteering

Volunteering is not a marginal phenomenon. In 2011, there were between 92 and 94 million adults involved in volunteering in the 27 EU countries. This means that between 22% and

3 as recalled in the Spanish law of the National Law 6/1996, 15th January, on Volunteering

4 Anheier (Helmut K.), *Nonprofit organizations- Theory, management, policy*, Routledge, London, 2005.

5 Halba (B), *Bénévolat et volontariat en France et dans le monde*, op. cit.

23% of Europeans aged over 15 years are engaged in voluntary work (GHK, 2010). While we acknowledge the way in which volunteering is practiced across the EU, this chapter will not provide details for each country, which in any case can be found in the GHK report.

One early and pioneering example of a project focused on volunteering across Europe was the VAEB project (iriv & alii, 2003-2006). Implemented in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), this Leonardo da Vinci project drew together 7 countries (France (leader), Germany, Austria, Italy, UK, Hungary and Poland) in order to design a tool, in the form of a portfolio and including a method and a guide for users, to identify and assess voluntary experiences. The tool was designed in three steps:

1. Identification of a voluntary experience by providing evidence of work experience;
2. Matching of the work experience in terms of competences on the basis of a table of 20 selected competences directly linked to a volunteering, and
3. Proposal of an action plan that included formal training to assess the skills and competences, improvement of the voluntary experience if it was not relevant enough for a professional experience, application to the labour market if the skills, competences and voluntary experience were relevant enough to be a candidate for employment.

The portfolio mainly addressed youngsters without any professional experience, parents having left employment to raise their children, and the long-term unemployed. This project was given an award in Helsinki in 2006 for excellent practice in addressing the priorities of the Copenhagen process and promoting enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET). By combining countries with different backgrounds and histories of volunteering and lifelong learning, the project was the first attempt at a European level to identify and value volunteering as an example of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The project had a further impact in France, where the portfolio was used in 2010 by Iriv, Animafac (Bénévolat & Compétences, iriv & Animafac, 2010-2011) and the College Blaise Pascal to identify and assess students' voluntary experience. The redesigned portfolio aimed to facilitate the students' access to the labour market (first option), or to apply for further education (second option), or to improve their voluntary involvement (third option). A "simplified" version of this portfolio, focusing more on students, was used in France by the SAS project among youngsters of the College Blaise Pascal.

2. The SAS training for youngsters (meso level)

As already mentioned, the SAS project promoted the notion and practice of volunteering as a means to help young people at risk of leaving school early or who had already dropped out of school. The training designed for the Success at School project aimed to engage young people by:

Objectives	Areas to be addressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding value to voluntary involvement and its values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity, altruism, and exchange
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizing the educational dimension of voluntary involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal and non formal learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the social dimension of associative engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning life values, resisting exclusion as a vehicle of integration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlining the professional dimension of voluntary experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being recognized as a “real” professional experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the cultural dimension of voluntary experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural exchanges and dialogue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing voluntary experience as a way to learn citizenship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights of association, procedure of democratic voting

Table 3.1 – Overview of the theoretical areas of the framework for volunteering

The experimentation combined the theoretical approach developed by Iriv on volunteering and the training for mentors developed by Assfam and the University of Northampton. The practical approach aimed at involving youngsters who were not used to either working in small groups or with the notion and practice of volunteering itself (“something for nothing”) in a concrete set of activities. The sections below detail and explain the theoretical framework by focusing on each of the areas listed in table 1.

2.1 Volunteering and altruism

Altruism may be defined as “the principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others as opposed to egoism”⁶. The term is of French origin and it was coined by the philosopher Auguste Comte, who derived it from the Latin ‘alter’ (1850-1855).

Volunteers are the touchstone of not-for-profit organisations since they are not paid in money or kind for their work. However, there is an immaterial reward or expectation of reward encapsulated by the Latin motto “*do ut des*”, which means I give to make you (or someone else) give.

According to David A. Kennett⁷ (1980), “pure altruism” means a gift of time or money without any reward of any kind, either material, or immaterial. In practice, however, volunteering implies that there is a reward and so we can speak of quasi-altruism. As far as volunteering is concerned, Kennett proposes six different types of quasi-altruism that correspond to immaterial goals:

- *quasi-altruism with intangible compensation*: you give your time to obtain respect from the person who benefits from your gift or from the people who witness this gift;
- *quasi-altruism in the Theory of Games perspective*: you give to impress a third person or to make things be positive for you in the future;
- *quasi-altruism in the sociobiological context*: you give because your parents or your family have shown you the way, you have received some kind of “altruistic gene” or biological predestination;
- *quasi-altruism and the Rotten Kid Theorem*: in a group, there is a social income which is bigger than all the incomes gathered, and if you want to benefit by this synergy you had better act as a volunteer;
- *quasi-altruism and social pressure*: to avoid social costs and psychological guilt, you prefer being a volunteer;
- *quasi-altruism and sponsorship*: you give to promote a positive image of yourself and so a complementary profit in the near future in your profession or social life.

⁶ Dictionnaire Larousse, Paris, 2011.

⁷ Kennett (David A), « Developments in the Theory of Public and Private Redistribution », *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, April 1980

Volunteers' motivations are often mixed and unconscious. Some of them are closely linked to religious beliefs while others are related to social awareness and responsibility. Some motivations are private (personal events usually linked to a change or a failure in one's life), other ones are more social or public-oriented (defence of rights, active citizenship).

2.2 Volunteering and citizenship

Volunteering is considered as one of the main civil and civic rights. In the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* of the European Union ⁸, adopted in 2000 by all the members of the European Union, the EU recalls in the Preamble:

1. The "indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity";
2. The principles of democracy and the rule of the law
3. It places the individual at the heart of its activities by establishing the "citizenship of the Union"
4. It strengthens the protection of fundamental rights by making those rights more visible in the Charter.

In particular, three freedoms, listed in Chapter II of the Charter, are directly linked to volunteering and associations:

- Article 10- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 11- Freedom of expression and information
- Article 12- freedom of assembly and of association- "everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association at all levels, in particular in political, trade union and civic matters, which implies the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests".

Most of the associations in Europe and France do not have any link either with political parties or with religious groups – the majority are in sports, youth and culture; social services; culture; environment. We accept, however, that this might not be the case in

⁸ Official Journal of the European Communities, Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, Brussels, 18.12.2000, C 364/1

other countries where historically volunteering might have been supported by the church or the state.

2.3 Volunteering and education

The link between volunteering and education is at the heart of the SAS project. It has to be understood in two ways: volunteering as an example of non-formal and informal learning (see for example, the VAEB project 2003-2006 & Year of Volunteering 2011); and the skills and competences acquired and developed through volunteering linked to key competences (EU 2006).

First and foremost, volunteering is to be considered an example of non-formal and informal learning, as opposed to formal learning. The definitions of these different kinds of learning are given in the glossary published by the CEDEFOP⁹ (2001; 2002):

1. Formal learning is the kind of learning acquired at school – “Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.”
2. Informal learning - This is the kind of learning acquired in an association. Volunteering is mostly considered a leisure activity – “learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional or non-intentional (or incidental/random).”
3. Non formal learning - This is the kind of learning acquired in an association; for instance, when training is offered to volunteers – “learning which is embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element (something described as semi-structured learning). It is intentional from the learner’s perspective. Non formal learning does not lead to certification.”

Secondly, a link must be made between volunteering and the key competences (EU, 2006) enhanced by the European Union since 2006 (European Union & European Parliament, 2006). The European Commission published in 2007 the “Key competences for Lifelong

⁹ Reference: Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle (CEDEFOP), 2001, 2002.

Learning- European reference Framework”¹⁰ in order to explain the theoretical background of such key competences. The key competences are considered equally important, because each of them can contribute to a successful life in a knowledge society.

Competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitude appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. On this basis, the reference Framework sets out eight key competences: Communication in the mother tongue; Communication in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Social and civic competences; Senses of initiative and entrepreneurship; Cultural awareness and expression. The four first competences may be considered as “basic” or “traditional competences”. They are defined or updated taking into account the needs of modern society. The four other competences are more “complex” competences and are a combination of social and professional ones (see fig. 1).



Fig. 3.1 Key 8 competences

¹⁰ This an annex to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning that was published in the Official Journal of the European Union. It is one of the outcomes of the joint work of the European Commission and the Member States within the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme.

2.4 Volunteering and the labour market

The portfolio designed by the VAEB project, and which has been implemented on a European level¹¹, identifies the skills and competences implemented by voluntary experience. The European team could detail a list of skills/competences, which may be considered transversal competences to be acquired or developed by volunteers.

1. **Interpersonal Communication** - Being able to communicate ideas and information to others and work with a variety of people in multi-cultural environments as volunteers, clients, or staff members
2. **External Communication** - Managing public relations; lobbying and advocacy; promotion of your work / organisation through presentations, media contact etc.
3. **Written Communication** - Being able to present information in written form, e.g. reports, articles, minutes of meetings
4. **Administration** - General office work e.g. filing, typing, organising meetings, purchasing supplies
5. **Accounting** - preparing accounts and managing budgets; listing income / expenditure, preparing balance sheets etc.
6. **Fundraising / Marketing** - Raising money; writing funding applications; increasing membership; developing sponsorship; publicising / advertising
7. **Event Organising** - Organising events such as seminars, conferences, general assemblies, exhibitions, competitions, shows etc.
8. **Managing information (documentation)** - Selecting and organising useful and appropriate information and data to better understand situations and identify needs and/or resources
9. **Research (analytic approach)** - Looking for appropriate information / data; desk research or field research; using qualitative or quantitative approaches; presenting findings to different audiences
10. **IT** - Using computer programmes, e.g. Word, Excel, Access; using internet and e-mail;

¹¹ VAEB project, assessing a voluntary experience, iriv & alii, www.europeassociations.net, 2003-2006

using databases; designing websites; programming

11. **Foreign languages** - Understanding spoken and written language/s; translating and interpreting; using language for business purposes
12. **Human Resource Management** - Recruiting, training, supervising volunteers, organising responsibilities and roles between staff and volunteers
13. **Project management** - Planning and developing programmes, defining scope, objectives, activities, resources and evaluation steps
14. **Stress management** - management of conflicts, facing any human or practical problem
15. **Active Listening** - Being receptive to what others say, showing empathy, not assuming a major role in the conversation, responding to requests for help
16. **Being Proactive** - Showing initiative and creativity, responding to changing situations; being flexible
17. **Advice Giving** - Specialist or general consultancy; counselling
18. **Negotiation / Mediation** - Facilitating constructive debate; finding compromises; finding satisfactory solutions to conflicts
19. **Problem Solving** - Finding appropriate solutions to specific situations; management of stress
20. **Decision Making** - Identifying possible options and assuming responsibility for choosing best outcomes
21. **Leadership** - Being able to take a lead; making strategic decisions to move forward; representing your organisation externally
22. **Teamwork** - Contributing to a collaborative climate; cooperating to reach common goals, accepting others points of view
23. **Networking** - Creating and developing partnerships with individuals or organisations
24. **Motivating Others** - Encouraging others to get involved

25. **Training / Teaching** - Teaching / training on an individual basis or in a group, in an informal or formal environment)
26. **Personal Responsibility** - Showing commitment and reliability; being able to organise your time and manage your work; motivating yourself

2.5 Volunteering and social inclusion

Volunteering addresses various aspects of social exclusion, as underlined by Smith et al¹²:

1. Volunteering helps to combat feelings of personal isolation, which for some people can be a key factor in their experience of social exclusion;
2. Volunteering empowers individuals, giving them the confidence and the skills to change their environment and themselves
3. Volunteering enhances people's sense of self-worth in getting involved and making a contribution to society
4. Thanks to volunteering, people acquire a range of hard (vocational) and soft (interpersonal) skills and so they enhance their opportunities to find a job (impact on employability)
5. For some people volunteering provides a route to employment, for others it provides an alternative to employment with a professional experience (impact on unemployment)
6. Volunteering has a wider impact on the symptoms and causes of social exclusion by providing services, in many cases to socially excluded groups, by challenging stereotypes and by bringing people from different backgrounds together

Nevertheless, volunteering may be seen as too exclusive. Several psychological barriers have to be overcome:

1. Myths exist that equate volunteering with activities undertaken by certain "mainstream" groups within society and a narrow range of activities within formal organizational settings. If there are still under-represented groups in volunteers (migrants and ethnic minorities, disabled people, ex-offenders...), this stereotypical image of volunteering has

¹² Davis Smith (Justin), Ellis (Angela), Howlett (Steven), O'Brien (Jan), « Volunteering for all ? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion », Institute for Volunteering Research, London, 2004

been challenged as alternative (often informal) forms of volunteering gain visibility and recognition and as organisations succeed in involving volunteers from previously under-represented groups

2. People's perception of time – both the amount of their “spare time” available and the time demands of volunteering – may create other barriers to involvement. In under-represented groups, some (disabled people, ex-offenders...) were resisted regular schedules. They found it hard to sign up in regimented activities.
3. Lack of confidence is a key barrier. It is exacerbated for individuals who have experienced exclusion in other areas of life and when volunteering takes place in unfamiliar environments
4. Prejudices and stereotypes held by staff, other volunteers and service users put some people off staying involved.
5. The fear of losing welfare benefits may be a significant barrier.

2.6 Volunteering and diversity

Lastly, volunteering may be considered a means of integration for youngsters from migrant backgrounds. Several European projects have been implemented in the past years to enhance volunteering among under-represented groups such as migrants and ethnic minorities.

One of them was quite a pioneer, the Involve project - Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration¹³ was initiated by the European Center for Volunteering in 7 countries on a European level. It proposed 10 criteria for good practice that have to be taken into account to enhance volunteering among publics under-represented in volunteering, such as youngsters facing difficulty at school. In particular, it proposed a grid in order to identify examples of good practice to enhance volunteering from under-represented target groups (in the case of Involve, migrants and ethnic minorities). It might be quite useful for the SAS projects as many pupils facing difficulties at school have a migrant background. They may also be less familiar with volunteering, as the most usual way to be socially involved is through their family or their community.

13 Involve project initiated by the ECV in 6 countries, 2005-2006 (www.involve-europe.eu)

Criteria for good practice	Ways to enhance the involvement of youngsters in mainstream organisations (work with them on the following issues)
Accessibility - Volunteering needs to be easily accessible for youngsters from migrant backgrounds	Informing them on the youngsters' attitudes towards volunteering
Diversity - recruiting migrant volunteers	Insisting on the win-win situation for both sides: organisations learn from their new young volunteers and benefit from the creativity they bring
Clarity and quality of volunteer placement for both the organisation and the volunteers	Proposing attention on the individual and guidance to match volunteer needs and associations' expectations to explain what volunteering is about (in general) and about the objectives of the volunteer placement
Skills development- the Human Resources approach	Insisting on the very special skills attached to a migrant background, especially for youngsters
Being valued – ceremonies, awards...	Asking for acknowledgement of the role and the achievements of young migrant volunteers by the organisation and the general public
Visibility - information	Implementing an information campaign, publishing articles in local papers showing the involvement of young volunteers
Community empowerment and links with local community	Facilitating direct contact between the local community and youngsters can enable them to make a real difference to the place in which they live
Networking - building, bonding and bridging social capital	Networking with the youngsters' community and between youngsters and mainstream organisations
Sustainability - long term strategy	It cannot be a "one shot" strategy but a long term one. Thinking of a time schedule
Transferability	Preparing the transfer of good practice to other associations.

3. The competence approach (a microeconomic level)

One of the main goals of the SAS project was to motivate students facing difficulties at school thanks to the “detour” or “alternative pedagogical approach” offered by a voluntary experience. The skills acquired through taking part in volunteering would be useful for both succeeding at school, as a future employee, and last but not least as a citizen.

In this perspective, we have tried to summarize in the following table the skills and competences required for being a volunteer and a pupil taking into account

- the key competences that have been enhanced by the European Commission since 2006 in order to promote the competence approach in the framework of the Lifelong Learning approach
- the competences acquired in the association, as identified in the portfolio for voluntary competences designed by a European team (VAEB, www.europeassociations.net, iriv and alii, 2003-2006).
- the competences at school, as identified by French researchers in the French report on Education which is the main reference work in France for the “Common basis of knowledge and competences to be acquired by French pupils at school” (Thelot, 2005)

Key competences (EU, 2006)	Competences at school (Thelot, 2005)	Competence in the association (iriv & alii, 2006)
Communication in the mother tongue	Fundamental basic skill: literacy Learning the national language/the mother tongue may be different (for pupils with migrant background)	To be able to answer the questions asked by the public of the association both in an oral way and in a written way
Communication in foreign languages	Fundamental basic skill: language Learning foreign language (English for most of the European countries, another language for English people it should begin in primary school)	To be able to explain to foreign people the main aim of the association, its activities, its outcomes....

Key competences (EU, 2006)	Competences at school (Thelot, 2005)	Competence in the association (iriv & alii, 2006)
Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology	Fundamental numeracy Mathematics since primary school	To be able to build a budget, a balance sheet, to collect the financial data concerning the association (resources/expenses)
Digital competence	Fundamental skills in information and communication technologies (ICT) Access to computer since the primary school	To be able to develop the website of the association, a weblog to enhance communication with its public
Learning to learn	Learning to learn supports all learning activities	To be able to explain to other volunteers the tasks to be fulfilled, to develop any support to explain the content of the mission
Social and civic competences	Some "optional" activities meant to enhance a collective work or "civic learning"	To be able to raise awareness on a specific problem in society among the general public To be able to defend a cause
Senses of initiative and entrepreneurship	Any activity meant to develop critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision-taking and constructive management	To be able to create and implement an activity among the association To be able to create its own association
Cultural awareness and expression	Most creative activities such as painting, drawing, theatre,	To be able to express a different perspective considering a given context To be able to involve different cultures

Table 3.2 comparison of key competence acquisition in school and through working experience

Conclusion

Volunteering is not a marginal phenomenon. It has been celebrated for the past 15 years both on an international level (International Year of Volunteering- 2001) and on a European level (European Year of Volunteering- 2011). This is not by chance, as a voluntary experience may be considered an emblematic example of non-formal and informal learning.

In this perspective the Success at school project has highlighted the link between Volunteering and Education. It has offered an alternative pedagogical strategy for pupils facing difficulties at school or who have already dropped out to re-engage with school on the basis of a positive experience which both improves their self-confidence and also allows them to acquire skills and competences needed at school and for their future professional career.

The SAS project first designed a training programme in order to explain the main value of a voluntary experience and the concrete ways to promote such an involvement among youngsters, taking into account the skills and competences youngsters could be able to develop, making the link between school, association and the labour market. In complement, the SAS offered tutoring for educators, understood in the broad sense of teachers, social workers, volunteers... in order to support pupils to bridge the gap between "places" of learning (school, association...).

This might be the next step for the Success at school project, and a crucial recommendation to be made to policy makers: to integrate in the pedagogical strategies to combat Early School Leaving (ESL) Volunteering as an "official" alternative pedagogical approach to re-engage in education pupils at risk of dropping out. Learning by doing has already been promoted in innovative pedagogical strategies. Learning by contributing to the Community might be tomorrow's main goal in education: being prepared to be a future worker (on the labour market) but also being an active citizen (in society).

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CHAPTER 4:

Mentoring: the key to successful volunteering in the SAS project

Magali Ciais and Samira Youssouf, ASSFAM

Introduction

This chapter introduces the notion of mentoring in order to then show how mentoring was used in the experimentation carried out by the 7 associations in the 6 countries comprising the Success at School project team. As already mentioned in the introduction to this book, the SAS alternative pedagogical approach consisted of combining volunteering activities and mentoring support for young people. Mentoring is presently heralded as an effective means to: 1) support children and young people in school, 2) students and apprentices to bridge the gap between education and employment, 3) and also as a way to support new staff. And yet it is far from simple. For this reason, the partners in Assfam and the University of Northampton developed a guide to mentor training. In doing so they took into consideration variation across countries as well as the available literature on mentoring.

As such, this chapter does not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of mentoring. Rather, our purpose is to present how the role of the mentor was conceived and implemented in the Success at School (SAS) project. From our experience in the SAS project, this chapter offers some recommendations on the mentors' skills, the mentors' training and the mentoring process. First, though, it is necessary to propose foundational

definition of mentoring, the specificity of this relationship and examples of practices and legal frameworks about mentoring in Europe.

1. Mentoring: a broad concept with diverse definitions and practices but a lack of recognition

1.1 A multiplicity of definitions for a specific role

The word ‘mentor’ originates in ancient Greece. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Mentor was the counsellor of Telemachus, son of Odysseus. Despite its ancient history, the word is not commonly used across Europe. In French, for example, it is more common to use the word *tuteur*, which in English can be translated as guardian. Etymologically, the word *tuteur* derives from the Latin verb *tueri* meaning to “protect, maintain, ensure”. While the word *tuteur* connotes protection, the word *mentor* relates to notions of support and advice, thus evidencing the balance of protection and autonomy in this type of support. The notion of balance will be discussed further in this chapter in relation to the positioning of the mentor in their relationship with the mentee.

One of the first challenges to face when dealing with the notion of mentoring is that ‘No agreed definition of the term has ever been reached and definitions actually abound’ (Devecchi, *et al.* 2013). In this context finding a common definition amongst 6 different countries and partners from diverse professional backgrounds was challenging. However, the following broad definition was agreed upon:

‘In a general sense, mentoring can be defined as enabling individuals to realize their potential to the fullest. According to Wasburn (in Kentzer, 2011 [2007]) ‘a mentor is anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge and opportunities for whatever period the mentor and protégé deem this help to be necessary’ (Devecchi, 2013).

This definition was broad enough to allow any of the partners to develop and tailor the mentoring practice to their own specific national and professional contexts. However, the same definition was also precise enough to serve the mentoring objectives, i.e. the realization of the mentee’s potential, an enactment of their abilities accompanied by a mentor.

We can add to this definition that mentoring is a process based on a relationship between the mentor, the mentee and also their environment. To provide the success of this process the partners of “The challenge of tutoring”, a Leonardo Da Vinci project (2009-2011), state

in their charter that:

“The process of tutoring is successful when the tutor acts as a facilitator of the integration, learning and personal development of the tutee”

1.2 Mentoring as both a formalised and a flexible relationship

According to Baudrit (2007), mentoring is always based on the rules operating in an organization. In this sense it is a formalised relationship. Nevertheless, the degree of formalization depends on the context of its implementation, and of the organization where the act of mentoring is located. Therefore, in some cases the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is very codified, enacted through specific tools, along a pre-determined path and within a pre-defined timeframe. In other cases, it is less formal, more open and, thus, it is left to the mentor and, above all, the mentee to determine their respective input, the nature of their relationship, and how to organise their meetings.

Whatever its level of formalisation, the SAS project partners agreed that the mentoring relationship should remain flexible enough to accommodate the needs of the mentee and of his or her chosen volunteering project. Such flexibility was intended to provide ways for the mentees to benefit from opportunities different from traditional academic learning, and therefore enable the young people to establish a type of relationship different from the more formal teacher-student relationship. This relationship is well described in the “HEAR ME” (Highly EducAted Retirees Mentoring Early School Leavers) project:

‘A mentor who interprets his/her relationship with the mentee as teacher and pupil has made a serious error and missed the whole point of the exercise. Admittedly, as the relationship develops there will be an exchange of advice and the sharing of experience and knowledge, but this will be a response to the specific needs of the mentee and is given with his/her full and willing consent.’ (HEAR ME project 2011).

1.3 Examples of mentoring practices in Europe

The SAS was not the first project to use mentoring. Several other projects in European countries have focused on mentoring young people as part of their apprenticeship, this being the most common form of mentoring. However, the SAS project’s approach of combining mentoring with volunteering is innovative. This is because examples drawn from European projects show two kinds of mentors: company mentors and academic mentors.

1.3.1 Company mentors

This kind of mentoring is found in most countries. A company mentor is a person, usually an employee, who welcomes and supports the youngster, or new member of staff, in the company. In the case of mentoring a young employee, the mentor helps the youngster to learn the profession as well as introducing him or her to the culture of the organisation. Two Leonardo da Vinci projects dealt with this type of mentoring: *Practices exchanges on mentoring and CoPilote*.

The first project ran from 2009 to 2011 as cooperation between three countries: France, Portugal and Lithuania. Its aim was to improve and develop mentoring in companies, and thus to promote the recognition of the mentor's role. The *CoPilote* project (<http://www.copilote.org/index.php?langch=en>) was a two-year project (2006 to 2008) conducted in 8 countries in Europe. It dealt with mentoring young apprentices in construction companies. Interestingly, the partners in this project also noticed that the mentor was defined and conceived differently across the various countries. This diversity reflected the different national definition, legislation and practices. The *CoPilote* project reported a lack of recognition of the role of mentors in companies.

1.3.2 Academic mentors

An academic mentor can be a teacher, a researcher, or an employee at the university or in an academic institute. She/he supports the student during the stage of internship in a company. The European LEONARDO project "Procertu" (<http://www.mines-ales.fr/pages/procertu-la-certification-professionnelle-des-tuteurs>) studied academic mentors in six countries in Europe. A reference document of academic mentoring was developed in which all activities / functions identified are based on many different knowledge and expertise, dependent on the different meanings and purposes of mentoring. In this regard they discovered that the academic mentor is defined differently in each country. Here are three examples of academic mentors, showing their country specific features:

» Example in Austria

The mentor is the main spokesperson when the mentee encounters a problem during her/his internship. The mentor is responsible for evaluation, project certification, the internship and documentation. She/he supports the student for his professional orientation. There is no training to become a mentor who is left to make her or his own judgment as to how best to help the mentee.

» Example in Poland

The mentor is a permanent employee who is given 20 hours per week dedicated to academic mentoring. She/he has a lot of experience, has studied professional orientation and is able to help the student. The mentor is also expected to have contacts in companies and is responsible for following the professional progress of the student. As with Austria, there is no specific training for academic mentors, and it is left to her or his own judgment as to how best to help the mentee.

» Example in France

In France, the academic mentor is an advisor who helps the student to integrate in the company during the internship. The mentor also evaluates the student's skills in collaboration with the company mentor. Nowadays, new practices of mentoring are noticeable, e.g., personalized training plans. Unfortunately, there is not enough money to support this kind of project and mentoring is seen as not attractive.

1.4 A lack of official recognition

From the examples above, the lack of official recognition of mentoring appears to be a common issue across different European countries. As recognition is crucial in promoting and formalising a practice, a lack of agreed definition and acknowledgement of the roles of the mentor represent a challenge. In this respect, the Leonardo da Vinci project 'The challenge of tutoring' (2011) proposed a charter which:

'established some common benchmarks and a joint methodology for promoting an European framework of tutor(ship).' (The Charter of Tutoring, 2011)

The partners of this project insist on the necessity of recognising the "tutor function at the European level" as:

'a warrant of success in the learning process, integration and personal development of the human person in all the stages of his/her education and training process.' (The Charter of Tutoring, 2011)

As the rest of this book will show, establishing recognition of the mentoring/tutoring role was a challenge encountered in the SAS project. Consequently, one of the project's recommendations is that of valuing the role of the mentor as an important form of support for young people at risk of leaving school early.

2. Being a mentor with early school leavers (ESL) in the SAS project

As we have seen above, the mentoring relationship is different from those found in traditional school environments. A fundamental difference is that it provides an alternative space that allows the mentee to experiment, learn and grow in a safe environment. However, the personalised approach inherent in the mentoring relationship requires specific skills, competences and capabilities, besides being available when the mentee requires the support. Defining which skills and capabilities are more appropriate is not easy. In the SAS project mentors were drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds, ranging from trained professional, to volunteers already involved in mentoring, to university students researching and/or studying in the field of education. In this section we draw from lessons learnt during the experimentation to propose some basics skills and training elements for the mentors.

2.1 Developing a training package for the SAS mentors.

As already mentioned, the SAS project's innovative approach rested on combining volunteering opportunities for young people at risk of ESL with the support of mentors. Mindful of the challenges but also opportunities within both volunteering and mentoring, the project proposal included as two of its outcomes, the development and testing of two training packages: one for volunteering and one for mentoring. Assfam in Paris was responsible for the development of the mentor training. They worked with colleagues at the University of Northampton, who collaborated with experts from the University Centre for Employment and Engagement (UCEE), a centre, which is responsible for student engagement in a variety of activities from volunteering to work experience.

The aim of the mentor training was to enable the mentors to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding to support the young people successfully during their volunteering experience, and to ensure that the young people gained the skills and competencies required to be successful at school and in their lifelong learning education. A plan for the training was presented at the partners' European meeting in Bologna in October 2013. The plan included a number of areas of common interest as shown in the table below:

Session	Content
1	Aims and objectives of SAS project, and mentor training The causes and consequences of ESL, NEETS, disengagements Equality and diversity

Session	Content
2	What is mentoring? Building a positive relationship
3	Communication Inter and intra personal skills
4	Safeguarding Health and safety
5	Records and ethics
6	Dealing with conflict Support for you
7	Building self-esteem SAS portfolio
8	Q&A, evaluation

Table 4.1 – summary of mentor training content

The common objectives to be achieved through the training were:

- To clarify and explain the aims, objectives and outcomes of the SAS project
- To gain an understanding of the causes and consequences of early school leaving, disengagement and non-participation in education
- To understand the nature of volunteering and the benefits, but also pitfalls of involving young people in volunteering activities
- To gain an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and features of successful mentoring
- To clarify the role and nature of the portfolio

- Risk and safety issues regarding both the young people and the mentor

Mindful of the differences across the various countries, it was decided that each partner would develop the training in a way, which was responsive to cultural and social context, but also appropriate to the level of knowledge and expertise of the mentors to be recruited. The country case studies later in the book provide an account of how training the mentors took place in each country.

2.2 Mentors' basics skills: lessons learnt during the experimentation.

The period of experimentation was valuable in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Clearly, the conditions under which researchers, mentors and mentees had to work were different in each country. More to the point, the conditions changed as the experimentation got under way, as both mentors and researchers had to solve problems arising from the context. Despite such challenges, the final evaluation of the mentoring brought to our attention some common findings across the partnership, such as the types of skills mentors require, which can be used as guiding principles in other contexts as well.

» Be able to create the conditions for good communication

To create a good relationship it is important to understand each other. The mentor has a key role in ensuring that mentees are enabled to communicate effectively. The mentor should also be mindful of the fact that young people at risk of leaving school early might have suffered failures and setbacks and found communication with adults difficult and problematic. Consequently, the mentor should be able to adapt his/her language to that of the mentee. The ability to adapt language is called cognitive congruence, which according to Moust (cited by Baudrit, 2007) is the ability to:

- Express oneself using the mentee language;
- Use notions or concepts that are familiar for the mentee;
- Explain in terms understandable by the mentee.

» Be knowledgeable of the content to be transmitted

While good communication can establish a positive relationship with the mentee, the mentor's knowledge and understanding of the intervention to be delivered can ensure that the partnership delivers effective support as well. In this sense, mentoring is not just about

friendship: it is friendship with a purpose. In regards to the SAS project, the content to be delivered is not essentially academic in nature, although there is still a teaching-learning relationship between mentor and mentee. The non-formal and informal learning which takes place through volunteering addresses both the personal and social aspects. At a personal level, the mentor can support the young person to understand him/herself and delineate a personal plan. In this regard, the mentor helps the young person to reflect on their skills and competences, problems and aspirations.

(I learn to listen to the people, to adapt to many different situations" (French mentee)

At the social level, the mentor supports the young person to integrate and be an effective team player. In this regard, the mentor informs the young person about the nature of mentoring and volunteering, and the skills that can be gained through them (see the previous chapter for a detailed list of skills).

"I really enjoy this project and I learned and transmitted some of my values like respect, work as a team, each of us brought some thing and that what a team work is" (French mentee)

» Be able to establish a relationship based on trust

Although effective communication is necessary, it is not sufficient alone to ensure a successful mentor/mentee relationship. Rather that relationship needs to be based on reciprocity and mutual understanding so that it enables the young person to grow in confidence. In order to achieve this, there has to be a sense of mutual trust in each other. To establish and maintain a relationship based on trust it is important to build a safe environment, which:

- Is based on mentor and mentee entering the relationship of their own free will;
- Has rules of reciprocal commitment which all parties abide to;
- Is grounded in respect for each other and, specifically to the mentor, respects the mentee's life choices and is mindful of fragility, but also resilience of the young.
- Is mindful of the need to respect confidentiality, while at the same time being clear about when such confidentiality can be broken in the best interest of the young person;
- Is non-judgemental and open-minded, while at same time prepared to give advice

when needed by involving the young person to reflect and build positive scenarios.

- Shows commitment in practical ways, such as keeping appointments.

In some cases building the relationship is easier, as the mentor is already perceived as being different, as in the example below,

“They immediately understood that I wasn’t a teacher and they talked easily with me. A teacher represents the institution and the authority.” (ASSFAM employee, France)

On the other hand, closeness in age can be a challenge for some mentors, as was the case here,

‘Maybe they won’t respect me because I’m not that much older than them’. (Student mentor, University of Northampton, UK).

» Be able to promote the mentee’s autonomy

Trust is also grounded in achieving a balance between interjecting one’s experience and know-how and ensuring that the mentee develops independence, as shown in a mentor’s comment below,

‘Fear of being too assertive and holding back the impulse to offer solutions.’ (mentor, University of Northampton)

This is best achieved when the mentor works towards enabling the mentee to become autonomous, that is, able to make decisions independently.

» Be able to promote and support the mentee’s motivation and aspirations

In supporting the young person’s motivation and aspiration, the SAS mentors had to combine both the general aspirations of the young people and their motivation to take part in volunteering. Fuelling motivation can be one of the major challenges for young people who have lost faith and trust in school,

‘The main challenges faced by mentors are the following: [1.To](#) motivate youngsters facing difficulties at school’ (mentor, IRIV, France)

The mentee’s motivation for engaging in a volunteering action can be of various kinds. It may include a socio-emotional dimension because it can promote social cohesion, an

educational dimension in the sense that it can enable her/him to continue or find a new way of studying, or help she/he to point out what they want to do /or not do in life, or focus on the joy of learning new things about themselves. In some instances building motivation starts by focusing on what the young person is already capable of doing,

'It's a way to show them that they have a lot of skills, that they can be useful for people in need and for themselves too.' (Volunteer in an association, Mentor, ASSFAM, France)

'to find the right approach and activities that are engaging and motivational for ESLs.' (Mentor, ERGO Institute, Slovenia)

There are no magic formulas for how to build motivation, but it is important to talk with the young person to maintain and facilitate the success of the process.

Finally, it is also important that the mentor is motivated to be part of the project: her or his motivation will have an impact on how she or he can motivate the young people as well. For example, some mentors motivations during SAS project:

- Interest for the SAS project;
- Interest for the innovative point of the SAS project;
- Interest by the mentors/mentee non academic relationship;
- Desire to help young people to develop their skills;
- Interest in helping young people who are facing with difficulties;
- Interest in helping youngsters to valorised themselves, their skills;
- Desire to make a useful experience to their future profession of educators;
- Interest to develop their own skills;

» Be able to manage emotions

Emotions are inherent in all human relationships and therefore the mentor has to be aware of the way their emotions and those of the mentee or mentees impact on the relationship and on the volunteering activity. The evaluation of the mentoring in the SAS project suggests that mentors should not hide their emotions. In this respect, authenticity is a

valuable approach. However, the mentor should reflect on the limitations of his or her emotional state, as this might impact negatively on the relationship and, ultimately, on the support provided to the mentee. In doing this, and specifically for the young people involved in the SAS project, the mentor has to be mindful of the particular emotional challenges that these young people had and still have to overcome. In some cases, the mentor should also be able to manage emotions within the volunteering groups, such as, dealing with conflict and conflict resolution.

'Managing the conflicts between the elements of the group, teaching them to control their impulsiveness and emotional reactions to the problems' (CIES-UIL, Portugal)

Finally, the mentors should not have to deal with their own emotional difficulties alone. For this reason, it is important that they are supported throughout. This was the case in the SAS project.

'The main challenge is the traumatic experience of the refugee children and the need of solid mentors' 'equipment' with a large gamut of competences - intercultural, psychological, pedagogical, social, not easy to acquire in a short period of time.' (CERMES, Bulgaria)

3. A basic proposal to build a mentoring path

This chapter concludes with a set of ideas and recommendations to others who might be interested in setting up mentoring as a way to support young people in and outside school.

3.1 Being a mentor, a complex challenge of positionality

As already mentioned, being a mentor is not just about giving advice. Rather, it is a very challenging process in which the mentor has to learn and use a number of skills. To fulfill their role mentors must be able to adapt flexibly to the structure they work in, but also to accommodate and adapt to the needs of the mentee. Therefore, being a mentor forces one to deal with a complex positioning

...in the relationship with the mentees

All relationships are different, but mentoring relationships tread the fine line between building close relationships and maintaining appropriate distance. Invariably, the relationship demands commitment from the mentor, which takes time, and is consistent. Committing to being a mentor is not a decision to be taken lightly.

...in an organization and between organizations

The mentor is a facilitator but also a mediator and therefore he or she should build bridges between the formal context of the school and the informal or non-formal context in which volunteering will take place. Life history and the experience accumulated can be of great help to mentors in this instance. For this reason, mentors can come from all walks of life and they can be students, members of the civil society without a specific educational training, or other professionals.

3.2 Recommendations: how to be a successful mentor

Whether working for an association, a school, or as a volunteer, there are a number of points which can help the mentor be successful. Based on the experience of the SAS project, we suggest the following:

» Be informed and inform

As part of their training mentors in the SAS project were informed about the project, its aims and objectives. Mentors were also given the opportunity of being supported during the experimentation and they were part of the evaluation at the end. In this way, they were not only informed but they were given the chance to inform the project as well. Consequently, they were able to inform the young people and work from an agreed set of values as outlined in the sections above.

In addition, mentors need to gain information about the issues surrounding early school leaving and use this knowledge to adapt their support to the general, specific and personal needs of the young people. Finally, they need to understand the local school context in which the young people learn so as to empathise with the young people but also with their teachers. In this way the mentor can be a better mediator between the world of the young person and the world of school.

» be engaged and engaging

As already mentioned, becoming a mentor is not a decision to be taken lightly. For this reason, the mentors' involvement in the SAS project was voluntary and took place after the training. This allowed the would-be mentor to reflect and make an informed decision. Admittedly, not all mentors remained with the project until the end as personal or other factors impacted on their ability to volunteer. While personal engagement and commitment is important, so too is the mentor's ability to engage with young people and ensure their

ongoing engagement as well.

» Seek support

Being a mentor is very hard work, and is emotionally demanding. The persons in charge of the organization in which the mentor operate must be attentive to their needs, support their actions, and set clear objectives. The mentors need to share their practices with other mentors and be trained.

» Defining your actions

Depending on the particular context of your intervention, take the following into consideration when planning your actions: their quantitative and qualitative objectives; their strengths and limitations; the nature of the collaboration with those responsible for the association in which you operate; and last but not least, plan the activities with the mentee.

» Be aware of the limits of your activity

Those limits restrict mentors action. The mentor role is broadly defined, and so the limits must be discussed with the persons in charge of the organization to which the mentor belongs, the SAS team, and the mentee. It is important for the mentor and for the supported young people to know, discuss and respect the limits of the mentoring mission and redirect the requests which are not part of the mentor duties.

Knowing the situation of the supported young people will allow the mentor to adapt their approach, listening to all of needs, but the mentor is not there to provide all the answers. The SAS project is not intended as global social support for young people but relates more specifically to the context of the volunteering mission. A mentor in the SAS process is not a teacher; discussing the limits of the role will allow the mentor to best occupy his place.

» Setting up the legal arrangements

Make sure with the association and the SAS team that all the legal terms are covered (the question of parental authority for the minors, legal responsibility, insurance, agreement...).

» Negotiating and setting up the practical arrangements

Remember to put in place the practical arrangements for your activity specific to the needs of participants. For a more lasting commitment from the young people make sure

to negotiate these arrangements with them.

» Evaluating your activity

Remember to evaluate the outcomes of your activity, ask for feedback on your practices in order to improve them (debriefing with pairs, meeting with the SAS team).

Conclusion

In conclusion we want to highlight a specific output of mentoring for the cohesion of society. Reading all the partners experimentation report we note that mentoring permits the crossing of diverse elements of a society: generations, territory and social groups.

The University of Bologna (UNIBO) report, for example, illustrates this social group crossing well:

“The mentors have considered the meeting with the youngsters as very enriching from the human point of view. They also got in touch with social realities that they did not know and with suburbs of the city that they had never crossed before. (UNIBO, Experimentation evaluation 2014).

Mentoring has a place and function in social cohesion efforts to improve the “vivre ensemble”. And the participation of civil society reintroduces the ESL struggle as a challenge for all the European society and not only for the educational system.

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CHAPTER 5:

The SAS Project: change education between inside and outside the school

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The school dropout in society

School dropout is a complex phenomenon, both for the multiple causes that determine it, and for the ways in which it is manifested. By the term “dropout” we mean the set of factors that prolong or interrupt youngsters’ normal path inside the Education and School system: missing entrances; truancy/school-not-attendance; irregular school attendance; school failure/rejections; dropouts. At the same time, dropout is not an individual choice nor an intrinsic condition of the students, but rather it is the result of a failure relationship with the educational institution.

Morrow (1986) proposed five categories of students in dropout situation:

- Push-out - “driven out” students “undesirables” that the school tends to push;
- disaffiliated - that is, students who do not longer feel attachment to school;
- educational mortalities - “death education” that is, students who do not have the tools to complete the course of study and, consequently, dropout;

- capable dropout - that is students who go out because they do not socialized to the demands of the school;
- stop-out - students who “left out” of school for a certain period after returning there.

Depending on the concrete possibilities of access to the participants and the nature of the context in the different countries, the SAS partners identified the following target groups:

- ESLs (Early School Leavers); youngsters at risk of dropout;
- NEETs (that is, youngsters that were Not in Education, Employment or Training);
- youngsters living different kinds of social exclusion and marginality (e.g. Young Refugees in Bulgaria)

Most of the youngsters involved in the SAS experimentation (91%) were aged 14-17 years, while just the 9% of them were aged 18-24 years.

The SAS Project: social networks and alternative educational models

The articulation of Experimentation Model was discussed and elaborated with the Consortium Partners of the Project. As leader of the WP4, UNIBO proposed to the Consortium Partners to make both the starting dates and the length of the Experimentation flexible in order to properly take into account the differences, needs and time constraints of the different Experimentation settings (schools, associations, etc.), as well as the national specificities. Therefore, according to the specific diversity of the organizational contexts of their national education systems, all partners started the Experimentation at different times. This allowed - during the international partners' meetings - a fruitful confrontation between all the partners and the possibility to compare the “step by step” actions undertaken by the whole Consortium.

Specifically to the youngsters and mentors training, the following actions and procedures allowed a successful implementation of both:

- constructing an initial network of stakeholders interested in the project;
- analysing the phenomenon of school dropout in the different national contexts;
- networking with stakeholders, local associations and education settings where the

Experimentation was to be implemented;

- paying attention to the presence of specific programs against school dropouts and connecting the SAS Project with those already existing local institutions and policies dealing with school dropout and school failure.

Most of the partners continued to remain in the field even after the end of the experimentation: together with mentors and with the people who took part in the training and in the volunteering actions, SAS partners organized meetings to reflect on the experience they carried out in collaboration with schools, education centres and associations. Partners' engagement with key and strategic stakeholders and with mentors was also pivotal in the organization of the dissemination events. The quality of social ties and the quality of relationships established with mentors and with youngsters assured that a legacy of contacts and experiences was not abruptly ended with the end of the Project.

Comparing educational worlds: culture of the school and volunteering experience

M. is the leader of the group of children who attend the "Oasi" Centre. His school career was difficult and irregular; he completed the compulsory schooling by taking a qualification as a cooker at the vocational training Center. After school, he did different internship experiences in hotels; he told us that he often felt discriminated by his employer because of his Roma origin. After a series of precarious and poorly paid jobs, M. is now unemployed, depressed and struggling against different family problems.

The main reasons why he attends the "Oasis" Centre is having a space for positive socialization, involving his friends in his spare time. Sometimes he attends the Center simply because he has nothing else to do, sometimes because he genuinely wants to engage in a community social work under the guidance of educators of the centre.

M. is very charismatic, but he tends to have arrogant and aggressive attitudes when he doesn't feel respected. The experience of M. in SAS was fragile, because the mentors tried to guide him in his experience, to relate with him friendly and to gain his trust. M. proved to be a great event planner and proved himself capable of mediating conflicts among his peers; he regained confidence in his ability to deal with the outside world. He was able to open up and accept with enthusiasm the calls that aimed at involving him in the animation activities of the Education Centre.

(M., age 21, Male, Roma origin, NEET - Italy)

Each young person in the SAS project came with an individual story, a unique set of needs while also sharing with others the same experiences of disaffection and detachment from their learning in school. Setting up and planning the Experimentation was therefore a challenge.

Although schools were initially identified as a privileged setting for the selection of youngsters, other more informal education settings (such as Education/Youth Centres and associations) were progressively included as “fields” for both youngsters’ selection and for the Experimentation. Likewise, Consortium partners recruited mentors in different ways, according to each country specific features and according to each partner’s institutional “identity” and relationships with local stakeholders.

In the Consortium countries, there were already different national and local institutions addressing the phenomenon of school dropout. However, UNIBO proposed a prototype of the Experimentation that was based on the close connection between educational settings (both formal and informal) and the broader context (namely, voluntary associations). SAS Partners contributed to the elaboration of the prototype with their feedback and agreed that the protocol of the Experimentation had to be adapted to the different national contexts according to country specific features.

As far as the youngsters’ training was concerned, partners agreed the following objectives:

- introducing young people to the world of volunteering;
- offering youngsters at risk dropout different socialization experiences in different areas;
- increasing the social and cultural capital of young people;
- increasing the sense of self-esteem of young people;
- giving young people new skills and capabilities through volunteering;
- promoting the access to voluntary association of youngsters’ at risk of social exclusion.

After joint discussions, all partners agreed that at the end of the training course on volunteering, youngsters had to be invited to engage directly in a voluntary action. Engaging in a volunteering action - thus following a “learning by doing” approach - was considered by all partners a good strategy to achieve the goals agreed. Therefore, partners decided

to engage in further action in the trial in order to encourage young people's involvement in volunteer work after the conclusion of the training. In some cases, partners considered youngsters' practical volunteering actions as an integral part of the training course.

In general, the Consortium partners adopted a common methodology and a common model that was articulated as follows:

- initial training for mentors to introduce mentors to the mentoring process and to clarify the SAS' objectives and tools (Training course for mentors);
- introducing young people to the world of volunteering;
- partners organized ad hoc training sessions and workshops that fostered youngsters' active participation and direct experience within the voluntary associations (Training course for youngsters);
- mentors supported young people in this process while collaborating with school staff and educators who worked with youngsters: the main purpose was valuing the skills that youngsters achieved during their volunteering experience and identifying the tools for their formal acknowledgement (Mentoring);
- training sessions and workshops organized by partners to promote the exchange of experiences between young people involved in the SAS Project and young volunteers in associations, in order to foster moments of peer education (Mentoring).

UNIBO, together with the Consortium, decided to include in the experimental protocol the possibility of minor deviations in the organization of actions, granting to all partners the possibility to schedule both mentors' and youngsters' training according to their Experimentation settings needs and constraints. Flexibility in the implementation of the agreed protocol was a key feature that ensured greater effectiveness to the Experimentation, while maintaining the final common goals and establishing an intermediate stage of data collection and documentation of the process.

The Mentors' group

In the Odyssey, Mentor was the trusted friend and adviser of Odysseus, who, before leaving for Troy, asked him to take care of his son Telemachus and prepare to succeed him to the throne. This relation was intended to guide, protect and teach Telemachus during his travels, instilling wisdom and offering advice.

The use of mentoring as a possible tool against school dropout and school failure is not new, although still not widespread. Generally, the mentor at school accompanies a student in difficult situations to achieve a sense of self-esteem, for the enhancement of skills and knowledge of the student and as a counsellor in addressing relationship and inclusion problems of the student in the school context. The mentor's task is to work on the empowerment of mentees and the mentor proposed itself as a kind of mediator between the student and the school. The relationship between mentors-mentee is specifically a one to one relationship.

The original nature of mentoring in the SAS Project was that the mentor would engage the mentee at school or in contexts outside school and worked to support and guide the young person's experience in the world of volunteering. Therefore, within the SAS context the mentor was a vector that supported the mentee on the journey back to school by helping the mentee to appreciate the volunteering experience, helping to value it in terms of competences and skills acquired.

As already mentioned in previous chapter, the role of the mentor was intrinsic to the *detour* pedagogical approach. This is a terminology that comes from education sciences and designates educational activities that achieve the goal bypassing the cognitive barriers and working on the representations of the participants. Normally, in a traditional learning process, the trainer go from a point A to point B, but when traditional education does not work, there is a need to develop a detour pedagogy to get from A to B. In the SAS Project the detour strategy has been an experiential pedagogy that was based on a training course on volunteering, which in some cases has provided the direct involvement of young people in voluntary action.

Volunteering was the strategy to give young people the motivation to return to school based on the discovery of their abilities, on their school orientation, on the change of the young person's self-image as "losers" in their school careers. In the SAS Project mentors provided guidance and support in the "long tour" that the mentees had to make to return to school. The great attention paid to the training of mentors in the SAS Project was dictated by the need for mentors to have a very clear path that was offered to youngsters through volunteering and the ultimate goal of re-engaging the young people with school.

"The volunteering experience has enabled a more in-depth perspective of the barriers faced by those involved with the volunteering project. I have gained a better insight of the challenges faced by the young volunteers with regard to their education. It has helped to identify the immense need for more volunteering opportunities for young people so they may be given the chance to re-engage with learning in a less formal and linier way".
(C. mentor, KG)

Following the cooperative learning approach, mentors' training was organized by all SAS partners in order to foster mentors active participation. In the construction of the mentors' group the partners decided to involve three typologies of mentors:

- experts mentors: that is, people with previous experience in the fields of education and mentoring, namely teachers, educators, researchers, experienced volunteers, cultural mediators, professionals, social workers, psychologists;
- non experts mentors or mentors "on training": that is, students interested in the Project with or without experiences in volunteering;
- occasional mentors: that is, members of associations that partners got in touch with to organize visits and meetings.

In the SAS Project, mentors' training was not thought of as a "traditional one": the partners did not consider mentors as "passive recipients", but rather asked them to value and share in a cooperative way those skills and expertise they achieved through their experience as teachers, educators, trainers, members of associations, university researchers, students, psychologist, etc. Each partner decided whether to concentrate or rather to "expand" the time of the training sessions according to time constraints and specific features of their mentors' groups, as well as according to partners' human resources. Here below is an example showing one mentor's motivation to take part in the project:

She accepted to participate to the SAS Project because of its originality. She thinks that the success at school trough volunteering is a new method and she said: "I appreciated the volunteering approach because it's also the occasion for the youngsters to discover the world of work without taking any "risk"! It's a way to show them that they have a lot of skills, that they can be useful for people in need and for themselves too." According to her, a mentor supports the youngster during his volunteering, on the field and supports him on his discovery of the reality of the field. He is with the youngster directly on the field. A teacher realises an institutional support. But the mentor and the teacher have to work together to help correctly the youngster. As she had worked in animation centres, youth services (etc.), she has experiences on mentoring. She really appreciated to be a mentor through this Project. She helped her mentee to integrate the structure and the team, inviting her to the weekly team meeting; she presented her to the public. Then, she immediately proposed her to participate to the animation of a table tennis tournament. After all the animations, she took the time to talk with her mentee to exchange and to talk about the things to improve. She also took the time to formalize the skills. She listened and answered to the questions of her mentee, helped her when she had some fears because it's a public with strong social difficulties. She saw her mentee grow and become

more mature. "I used to work with youngsters and to be a mentor. But with SAS Project, I have discovered a new way to support youngsters: integrate youngsters through volunteering is a new approach and I think it's a good one. This kind of project is new and permits us to change our professional practices and, overall, to innovate them! This Project should be realised in all European countries".

(F, 39, French, worker, member of Association des Cités du Secours Catholique (ACSC - France), consolidated experience in working with youngsters and in volunteering)

All partners paid great attention to the training for mentors because they were aware that the success of the Experimentation depended - to a great extent - on mentors' understanding of the SAS' design, as well as on their ability to establish trust relationship with youngsters. Training for mentors was very rich for the topics addressed. In some cases, partners invited as "facilitators" in the training sessions experts, scholars or people with a consolidated experience in the field who were willing to participate for free and on a voluntary basis. The training was, therefore, interdisciplinary and it was based on innovative training techniques that fostered the active participation of mentors.

The process of mentors' recruitment and selection was very varied among the Consortium. The main strategies that partners used to select mentors were individual interviews, curriculum vitae evaluation, direct invitations to educators and teachers who were already working with youngsters (partners proposed them to follow them as mentors in their activities in the Project SAS). In general, however, all the partners selected mentors who were not too far apart in age from the generation of the mentees. Altogether participated in Project SAS 145 mentors: 15 for United Kingdom, France 24, Italy 32, Portugal 28, Bulgaria 31, Slovenia 15.

Albeit partners used different strategies in the recruitment process, a common criteria guided the selection of mentors: availability of time and effort, interest, endorsement of the Project's goals and objectives, ability to relate to children and adolescents based on their experience and their educational curriculum, ability to mediate conflicts. The effectiveness of recruitment procedures was proved by the fact that very few mentors left the Project without concluding the experience.

The variety of mentors' professional background allowed mixing the experiences, the profiles and the resources of the different mentors involved and building-up a group of people with varied and composite skills. The multiplicity of mentors' profiles helped answering the multiplicity of youngsters' needs; it was also a positive model for them and an opportunity to get in touch with a very different group of adults, adults that proved to be able to work together for a common goal.

The presence of staff members of the SAS Project in the mentors' group was strategic in many aspects because it allowed the following:

- preventing deviations from the goals of mentoring;
- fostering an equal and egalitarian relationship between all mentors, without duplicity between those who propose the action and those who implement it;
- the “in progress” monitoring by SAS staff of the Experimentation' effectiveness in the different steps;
- facilitating the process of data collection and documentation of the Experimentation.

As far as Experimentation in school settings is concerned, partners had to face - in some cases - bureaucratic constraints when proposing informal activities to be carried out by mentors with minors inside and outside of the school setting. For example, in the Italian case the difficulties were caused by the need to regulate and formalize the presence of external mentors within the school and to respond to problems of insurance coverage. In the English case, mentors were also required to have 'clearance' from the Criminal Records Bureau, that is, a necessary requirement for anyone working with children or young people; this further complicated and prolonged the process of mentors' recruiting.

“I decided to join the SAS Project because I was interested in experimenting alternative educational methodologies in socially disadvantaged contexts through the collaboration between associations of the territory, school and University. The role I played in this experience was coaching during school hours supporting the teachers and an educator from the Municipality of Bologna; I used to write a daily diary, reporting the activities that were carried out during the teaching hours in the morning and paying attention to the following points: indicate the presence of girls in the classroom; a brief description of the activities performed during the morning; comments on the girls; comments on the teachers; teaching methods: what works and what does not work.

During my working experience with a group of teenage girls with problems to fit in the school system, I had the possibility to get a wider perspective on the issues related to our Education system, the associations working in the field, and the social context. At the same time, I had the opportunity to become helpful for these girls. My role allowed me understanding the limits of the associations in perceiving the needs of the girls despite their collaboration. In my point of view, the conflict that the girls live, which is the sum of inside- outside the school experiences, should not be ignored or silenced but faced with teachers and educators in the class as a part of a more complete educational program.

I've noticed many times the girls' difficulty in expressing their point of view and, on the other hand, the lack of a real offer of sustain from the associations. The importance of transmitting values of education to people that live the educational context in a conflictual way is a goal that can be achieved with a stronger collaboration between the different realities."

(Mentor C., Female, 25 Italian)

"I joined SAS Project because I have been always interested in the development of a deeper knowledge on youth problems, and the objectives pursued by SAS Project inspired my wish to proactively contribute to such a topic. Moreover I think that the high risk of early school leaving is a significant problem that has never been approached in the university's courses, and for this reason I took the opportunity to deal directly and concretely with those issues. For me, it was very interesting and important to observe the youngsters in dropout situation in an informal setting like the Education Center "Oasi", in the Pilastrò district. As far as the SAS Project is concerned, it was useful for me observing boys who are in difficult situations (such as those that I worked with) outside of the school context. It is important that there is a 360 ° monitoring and it is natural that if the different people (teachers, educators, social workers ...) cooperate, it is easier to achieve visible results that may be evident only in the long run. During my field experience I had the opportunity to follow numerous training sessions organized by the SAS team; training sessions were an opportunity to learn useful tools for my experience with the boys and to share impressions and problems with other mentors. For the time being, thinking about the steps and the experiences achieved, I think I could collect personal considerations about the drop-out, starting from the conditions affecting such a phenomenon. Firstly, familiar and economic conditions have a huge impact on the dropping-out; on the other hand many youngsters do not consider the education like an essential instrument ensuring a safe future. In relation to this, the society is responsible for school disaffection, because the common values transferred to young generation are linked to the success and richness, with a strong emphasis on the easy money makers achieving the success without any efforts, influencing youngster's decisions. Despite those difficulties, the school plays a major and active role in this process; improvements of the quality and the preparation of teachers are undoubtedly fundamental. It is important to highlight that a positive and strong collaboration between civil society and local services is mandatory in order to face such relevant issues, and that voluntary organizations should be involved in the process."

(Mentor I., Female 25, Italian).

All partners had to face the same problem: that is, combining an alternative pedagogical method with the hyper-regulated and hyper-formalized logics of traditional training and schooling processes. In this sense, it was not obvious to propose the involvement of non-

professional mentors – often the young people themselves - with minors outside and inside the school. Moreover, alternative pedagogical Experimentations are often inspired by informal practices. The same SAS Project was not supposed to impose a rigid, “top-down” method; rather, the purpose was testing a possible model of alternative education that could be adjusted and further developed “bottom up” and according to the needs that progressively emerged in practice and in the field.

All the partners decided to tackle these difficulties in order to grant to “non professional” mentors too the possibility to get involved in the Experimentation. Non expert mentors’ contribution was, in fact, very important because they were not biased by traditional educational strategies and knowledge, thus, they could set their work with young people on different and innovative basis.

A “toolbox” against school failure: why it is important to train mentors

In the SAS Project, three main issues were addressed in the mentors’ training that corresponded to three different sort of training:

- *Training on the risk of dropout:* the goal was providing mentors - especially the non expert ones - with information and knowledge on the specific problems related to school failure and school dropout in each national context, as well as introducing the profiles of youngsters that they were going to work with. In this direction – for example - partners organized training sessions on the following subjects: methodologies and tools of formal and informal education to fight school dropout; school orientation and vocational guidance; adolescents in social disadvantage; intercultural aspects of social and education work; etc.
- *Training on mentoring process:* the goals were to provide mentors with specific knowledge on mentoring as an educational resource, analyzing the pedagogical potentials of the mentor-mentee relationship, understanding the skills and qualities required to be a mentor; developing empathy for young people and their situation.
- *Training on the SAS approach:* the goals were to provide mentors with information and knowledge on volunteering as an alternative pedagogical strategy to tackle ESL in theory and in practice; sharing with mentors the methodology and the philosophy underpinning the Success at School Project; understanding their role as a participant in a research Project; acknowledging and improving those skills and competences that were achieving during their volunteering experience. Cooperative learning, peer-education between mentors who had different levels and degrees of experience,

role playing, brainstorming and interactive dialogues, use of multimedia materials were the main methodological strategies that partners identified to implement the mentors' training. An unexpected result of the training for mentors was discovering the wealth of knowledge within the mentors' group. The training was more effective when it relied on the exchange of experiences among the group of experts mentors and not experts mentors, and, within these groups, between mentors who had a background in research and documentation, and mentors who had an extensive experience in the field of education intervention, but little time to devote to reflexivity processes. Expert mentors benefited from the training mainly because it was for them a chance to reflect on their daily practices. For the "academic" mentors (researchers), the main benefit was approaching theoretical issues starting from the practice, but improving as well improving the theoretical questions in order to properly address the real needs of the youngsters, educators and teachers.

SAS's Youngsters

As we have already mentioned, the phenomenon of school failure and school dropout are caused by multiple factors. Before abandoning school or before waiving their training, youngsters manifest a number of symptoms and lack of interest that school teachers and education professionals should detect.

Educational institutions, however, tend to underestimate the signals of the impatience that youngsters express towards the school and come to pay due attention when it is too late. In other cases, a school career characterized by difficulties, delays and rejections shows its consequences when, at the end of the compulsory education path, youngsters face the labour market, but also other aspects of their lives, without tools and without resources.

Schools and teachers, in particular, live school dropout as a form of criticism that youngsters express towards their teaching methods; and consequently, they fail to recognize their inability to adapt their traditional educational models to the changing needs of students. International migrations, the social exclusion experienced by families living the economic hardship caused by the global economic crisis and the radical shifts of both the economy and the production patterns, often make the school unprepared to face the challenges of the contemporary society.

The SAS Project focused on the prevention of the phenomenon of school dropout. All partners engaged in the difficult task of suggesting to the educational institutions the need for a profound rethinking of their teaching practices and education models. In this regard, involving schools and teachers in an Experimentation of alternative pedagogical practices

was a key objective that allowed teachers to reflect critically on their teaching strategies. To achieve this, all partners firstly identified the contexts where the Experimentation could take place and the contact persons/gatekeepers - teachers, educators, social workers, members of local associations, members of stakeholders network - who could facilitate the process of youngsters' group(s) identification. Subsequently, partners negotiated with the gatekeepers who work with young people their possible involvement in the Experimentation.

This phase was crucial for the implementation of the Experimentation because - especially in formal education settings, such as school - it is very difficult to be accepted and to propose activities as external actors. In this regard, it was essential for the Consortium to broaden and enrich their network of stakeholders by including those voluntary associations and formal/informal that partners progressively got in touch with during the fieldwork.

The Experimentations that some of the partners carried out in informal education settings - educational centres located in high problematic districts, refugee camps, associations, etc.- was an innovative, but consistent, contribution to the Project. Early school leaving is, in fact, a problem of the whole community and it is only through the synergies with the territory (schools, associations, volunteer mentors) that it can be addressed. In this regard, the choice of the Bulgarian partners of working with young refugees - for whom the right to education is seldom recognized and who are not perceived by institutions as ESLs- was an important innovation. It demonstrated that within the SAS framework, all partners worked beyond the formal categories of school dropout, fostering to the inclusion of all vulnerable youngsters, especially those at high risk of social marginalization. The selection process of young people who were to participate in the Experimentation was therefore an important opportunity to spread among the stakeholders of the Project an holistic approach to the issue of early school leaving. This approach was based on the prevention, on the promotion of a culture of social bonds through the contact with the world of volunteering and on the need to rethink traditional pedagogical practices.

Young people participated in the Experimentation on a voluntary basis, but a substantial initial work of motivation and support was played by mentors and SAS partners. The element that in many cases supported the commitment and perseverance of young people was the recognition and the valorisation by teachers, educators and associations of their experiences. The participation of youngsters in the SAS Experimentation was established and recognized by the partners in different ways: public ceremonies, certificates and recognition of their experience in the school curriculum. Altogether participated in Project SAS 195 young people at risk of dropping out: (United Kingdom 32 people, France 56, Italy 38, Portugal 20, Bulgaria 19, Slovenia 30).

Since she was a child, F. has had a difficult school career. Her family situation is characterized by a low socio-economic status, by the disability condition of her father following a serious accident and by a difficult and traumatic experience of migration from Kosovo. F. has always had enormous difficulties of behaviour: aggression towards adults and peers, destructiveness towards things, mistrust of adults, poor ability to maintain attention even for a short time, anger outbursts.

The daily presence of mentors in school, with whom she developed a positive relationship, the possibility to engage in alternative activities, the positive contact with members of the associations and the various visits in their headquarters in the city have sparked her interest towards the school. Slowly - from January to June - F. made great changes: she could achieve a greater well-being in the school that she previously abandoned because of the repeated conflicts with teachers and peers; the experience allowed her improving her will to enter into relationships with adults. Considered by all teachers a "terrible" student - nobody wanted to have her in their classroom - slowly F. proved to be a very fragile girl, but also eager to be understood and accepted.

The experience in the SAS Project allowed F. to enter into relations with social contexts different from those she knew and became an opportunity for her to experience other styles of relationship between young people and adults. Mentors worked with school teachers to enhance F.'s skills and competencies. They planned activities and experiences that could strengthen her self-esteem, and they involved her in educational group activities outside the school. During the Experimentation, F. openly opposed some of the planned activities (eg. one day she vandalized the repainted walls mortifying her mates' efforts). Her classmates used to support F. defiance attitudes, but in this occasion they severely criticized her. F. subsequently repaired the damage caused by her behaviour.

At the end of the school year, F. also managed to achieve the education objectives set out by the teachers and trainers; but above all, she learned to trust others and to work together.

(F., age 15, Female, Italy)

The SAS Project: between individual empowerment and social advocacy

Across the Consortium, the characteristics of the training for youngsters on volunteering were: interactivity, creativity, reflexivity.

Interactivity

All the training sessions targeting youngsters were carried out paying attention to the active participation of young people. The first goal was not to educate young people to volunteering but to introduce them volunteering as a possible reality of commitment and action. Partners carefully avoided “top-down” approaches to training and traditional schooling strategies that could provoke young people’s rejection. Some partners chose to conduct the training for youngsters in informal settings, such as free discussions under the guidance of mentors. At the end of the training course, youngsters were encouraged to present at public events and small parties to promote social life for the welfare of their broader community (the city, the neighbourhood). Some partners, together with their mentors’ group, also organized a final meeting to discuss and reflect with youngsters on their volunteering experience.

During the volunteering experience, the partners worked on: the ability of young people to be part of a group; the ability to make the group a space open to the acceptance of others; the abilities of young people to collaborate with adults. In some cases, youngsters’ experience in volunteering was therefore the main training strategy. In other cases, the partners organized - during the training course - meetings and visits to voluntary associations. The aim of these meetings was introducing to youngsters the issue of volunteering and voluntary associations voluntary organizations through direct experience, leading them to explore issues, methods and means of intervention in the community and to understand the principles of social responsibility. The associations offered their spaces, their volunteers and their time to welcome youngsters and described them their work, their ideas and their motivations. In some cases, associations had never got in touch with socially disadvantaged adolescents before.

The volunteering were an opportunity for the young people to get involved, discuss and reflect on issues which are not usually part of the curriculum. Although generally absent from school programmes, these issues can be considered the substrate of values and rights to which youngsters must be educated to become full citizens and - more broadly - responsible and caring adults. The struggle against gender based violence, protecting the environment, solidarity with the poor, the positive value of multicultural societies, the importance of culture, activism in building community ties and networks of mutual aid, the value of the preservation of the memory of the older generations, respect for the rights of LGBTQ people, the value of peace, the care of abandoned children, the defence of animals, and so on were just some of the issues addressed during the meetings with the associations.

Therefore the associations became “educational rooms” that allowed addressing issues

related to active citizenship and social commitment. In both cases, training was evaluated as an extremely positive experience by the youngsters; although more challenging to manage, partners' choice to adopt the "learning by doing" approach proved to be winning. Beyond the differences in the organization of the training course for youngsters, all partners decided to weave together informal and interactive training, the experiences of the associations and youngsters' concrete experience in volunteering.

"With regard to my experience in the classroom, I always tried to do my best, because with youngsters in dropout is essential to make them feel that the people who take care of them are the best teachers and professionals that the school may offer. Knowing that the school is investing on them is crucial to give back to these young people a "winning" picture of the school and a pro-positive adult figures that work with them to help them building up their future. My relationship with the pupils has been built on respect and trust; sometimes, it was even based on small concrete acts, asking them to tell their story, but always keeping the correct distance to ensure that my age was not negatively influencing my role. The relations established with the youngsters have been very important for me; reports and observation enabled arousing questions and reflections with respect to their future. Obviously the relationship is reciprocal, then the relationship with the students often have questioned the way I see and think about the school, coming from different school stories, and they always turned me curious to investigate the reasons and motivations that make teenagers expressing hostile attitudes toward the school. Finally, the educational relationships undertaken were very satisfactory and important from a human as well as from an emotional point of view, because working with adolescents means that it is impossible to remain unmoved by their experiences, emotions, interests and energies; these students shared with me some important life moments and this is certainly one of the greatest satisfactions I got from this experience."
(Mentor G., Female, 24, Italian)

These three elements were combined in different ways in the different Experimentation fields, but the common goal was to propose a training experience compelling, based on experience, that could stimulate the youngsters to think themselves as active agents of their lives.

Creativity

The main purpose of many of the youngsters' training sessions was fostering young people's creativity, encouraging them to think and plan a volunteering action for the welfare of the whole community. This volunteering action was supposed to be based on their own interests and their sensitivity. According to each country specific characteristics and

legal constraints, the volunteering action could have a more formal shape (e.g. it could be carried out inside a voluntary organization) or a more informal one.

Many partners had problems in offering young people the chance to get involved in voluntary activities because many associations did not accept among their volunteers minors: their presence compels the association to address insurance issues and responsibility in their protection. In some cases, partners overcame these difficulties thanks to the close collaboration with schools, teachers and other SAS stakeholders involved in offering extracurricular activities. In one case, a partner proposed to the school to formalize an official agreement that school, an association and youngsters' parents signed. This allowed the youngsters to be under the responsibility of the school while carrying out their activities. In other cases, the volunteering activity was carried out in the school with or without the intermediation of an association: in these cases, the volunteer work often involved the whole school and the group of children at risk dropout. This made it possible to make otherwise excluded students the protagonists and the promoters of a collective action.

L. is the eldest youngster of the class. She repeated class twice, that's why she's still in first year of the high school. In France, school is compulsory until 16 but L. wanted to continue school even if it wasn't compulsory for her anymore. She wanted to follow a social path that's why she is in this class. She realised her volunteering in a social rehabilitation and accommodation centre of the ACSC (Association des Cités du Secours Catholique) welcoming persons with strong social difficulties. She had the chance to be a volunteer there because she's an adult. Indeed, the youngsters under 18 couldn't become volunteer in this structure because the public is too difficult. So, L. felt favoured and valorised.

She realised a lot of activities like a table tennis tournament; she bought a popcorn machine for a cinema workshop; she participated at the volunteering day, etc. She was very invested. Moreover, she has started a civic service in another social rehabilitation and accommodation centre but it was stopped because of a bad relationship with her new mentor. This incident showed her the reality of the work world and she's now able to face this kind of difficulty. She's more mature, she now got an idea of what she wants to do at school and professionally. She continues her volunteering at the accommodation centre of ACSC and she kept contact with her SAS mentor who helps to write her CV for [example](#). Her SAS mentor told she's attentive, discreet, careful about what she says or does, has a good behaviour and wants to succeed in life. It was a good experience for both of the behaviour and wants to succeed in life. It was a good experience for both of them.

(L, 18, Female - France)

T. is 19 years-old, has 3 retentions and several situations of bad behaviour in class. He suffered from a very high disappointment with school and particularly with regular schooling, where he felt the teachers were incapable of hearing the students and respecting their views. He had nonetheless very high prospects for his future career: he wanted to go to LA and study cinematic arts, to become a movie director and producer.

The negative way he felt about school was proving to be an obstacle. After enrolling in SAS, choosing his volunteering activity in his area of interest and completing it successfully, T. decided to choose an alternative school pathway (professional) more appropriate for his expectations and future prospects. His school behaviour, enthusiasms and attitudes towards learning improved a lot, as well as his interest for volunteering which he wants to repeat. More so, the work he developed (organizing a youth cultural festival) proved him to be an excellent experience.

(T. , 19 years-old, Male - Slovenia)

Reflexivity

During the training and thanks to the meetings/visits to the associations, youngsters came into contact with different social realities, where they learnt to feel “inside” the contexts - such as the school, the district, the migrant workers’ hostels, the associations- from which they feel generally detached.

The main tool of this process was bringing “back to school” the experiences conducted by the youngsters, including them in their curriculum and formally recognizing their commitment through the network of involved stakeholders (*schools, national educational programs, municipalities, education and social services in the Districts, cultural and volunteering associations, NGOs*). Considering ESLs rejection towards traditional education, it was necessary to focus on practical tools for an alternative pedagogical approach. Therefore all the partners had to adapt the youngsters’ training. Volunteering actions ranged from environmental conservation, to the organization of cultural and anti racism events; from school requalification, to the promotion of ethnic diversity; from childcare and socio-cultural animation, to the promotion of solidarity with the most vulnerable subjects.

These activities were a proof of youngsters’ capability to engage in selfless actions; they were also an opportunity to test and value those social and cognitive

skills that youngsters achieved during the whole Experimentation (planning, negotiating with the others, being part of a group, expressing oneself properly). Mentors assessed these capabilities and competences; in some cases, skills and capabilities were officially acknowledged by those institution (namely schools) involved in the SAS Experimentation.

P., a 14 year-old girl with learning difficulties (2 retentions) but interested in concluding compulsory education (12th grade – high school), was greatly affected by the volunteering experience. She had the initiative to approach the local stakeholders and explain the area of activity she had interested in. She was accepted as volunteer at a local charity institution, Ramada's Parish Centre, as a childcare assistant at the nursery. The experience was extremely rewarding for her, since she acquired technical and social competences that will one day be useful for her future job. Her mentor also mentions how the recognition that came from both the nursery and her family made her have a clearer idea of what to do in the near future: she decided to enrol in a vocational course for childcare assistance.

(P., 14 years old, Female - France)

Conclusion

We reported some of the voices of the mentors and the young people that partners gathered during the Experimentation. The stories reported are useful to show how an intensive and flexible training, documentation and reflection on the experience of mentors and youngsters was done within the Project. The rich heritage of experience and field data was useful to think about the future sustainability of the SAS model: in this regard, the feedback and views from mentors were fundamental for all partners to understand how to implement and follow up the Project in the various national contexts even after the Experimentation' conclusion.

From SAS Experience emerged that some key aspects proved to be crucial for a successful implementation: non-authoritarian relationship between adults and youngsters: the informality as a resource to build-up relationships; importance of crossing the borders between inside / outside the school to address problems that youngsters often live at school (but that the school cannot address); importance of cooperative learning and learning by doing approach: young people learn better in groups of experiences; they learn becoming active citizens and participating in community issues through collective discussions that enable sharing reflections on their social life; importance of choosing volunteering associations that are able to engage in a relationship with young people: youngsters need to be

supported and motivated in their paths. It is not obvious that associations can offer education and relational skills; associations' members may not be keen in working with young people who have different problems of motivation, discipline, relationship with adults.

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CHAPTER 6:

Working with stakeholders: the Success at School approach

Simona Bezjak, Ergo Institute, Slovenia

1. Introduction

One important aspect and strength of the Success at School project was the establishment of a stakeholders' network across the six partner countries. This chapter outlines the nature of the stakeholder's network, the process by which the partners established the network, and the role the network played throughout the lifespan of the project. Although ensuring the support of community stakeholders is not an uncommon practice, the way that partners in the project created the network and how the network became central to the success of the project is innovative. This is particularly the case in regard to the transformational outcomes achieved by the close collaboration with some of the stakeholders and the results that this collaboration afforded to the benefit of the young people.

This chapter, therefore, reports on the national advisory groups (NAGs) that have been established within the SAS project in the six partner countries (United Kingdom, France, Bulgaria, Portugal, Slovenia and Italy). Because all seven project partners were involved, seven different national advisory groups were created comprising professionals, policy makers and practitioners in the field of early school leaving (ESL), education and

volunteering. The main initial objectives were to create a space for the discussion of the pedagogical training for the young people and for the mentors, and to provide feedback on the training in volunteering. In this regard, the NAGs, together with more specific forms of involvement, created the conditions for an exchange of different, but extremely valuable forms of knowledge, ranging from the more academic and theoretical to the practical knowledge and experience on the ground. Moreover, NAGs were the most powerful tool of the SAS exploitation strategy to enhance the project and spread the project results to right target groups – users who were involved in the experimental testing of the pedagogical and mentoring training, and potential future end-users of the project results after the lifetime of the project.

The following NAGs were created within the SAS partnership: two national advisory groups in France (NAG FR1 by the ASSFAM, and NAG FR2 by the Iriv Conseil), one in United Kingdom (NAG UK by the University of Northampton), one in Bulgaria (NAG BG by the CERMES – New Bulgarian University), one in Portugal (NAG PT by the CIES/ISCTE-IUL), one in Slovenia (NAG SI by the Ergo Institute), and one in Italy (NAG IT by the University of Bologna).

The dynamic of each national advisory group within the SAS project was unique in reflecting the context in which the training for young people, mentoring in volunteering and SAS experimentation were implemented. Given the variability within the young people (some being at risk of leaving school, while others being already out of school), some SAS national advisory groups were more focused on schools, some on associations and some on institutions active in the re-engagement of the ESLs. But generally, the NAGs in all countries included people and institutions that are active in the field of education (formal and non-formal and volunteering).

2. Definition, number and profiles of the stakeholders involved

Some national stakeholders and advisory groups were identified at the beginning of the project and were updated regularly according to the project development since, in some cases, various stakeholders became involved in various work packages or in various processes within the project. To keep track of the development and to construct a project database, national advisory groups were recorded in seven national stakeholder lists, one for each partner. As the project progressed and the network grew, a glossary was produced where stakeholders were divided into 3 general categories:

- *National stakeholders* –those people and institutions interested but not directly involved in the project (but they have some information about the SAS project).

- *Strategic stakeholders* –those people and institutions important to stay involved with and have a strategic role to play. They may be involved at some of the stakeholder meetings (NAGs) but do not play a regular role.
- *Key stakeholders* –those people and institutions actively involved in the project, for example in the experimental testing.

During the project progress and productive collaboration among all project partners, the national stakeholders lists were regularly updated with the new indicators showing the profiles of the NAGs and stakeholders involved. Consequently, the final version of the national stakeholder lists shows detailed overview of the composition of the NAG in each participating country. Data from the seven lists (NAG UK, NAG FR1, NAG FR2, NAG PT, NAG BG, NAG SI and NAG IT), show that 238 individual stakeholders (people) were involved in the SAS project. As shows the table 1 below, 71 people were identified as national stakeholders, 74 people as strategic stakeholders and 93 people as key stakeholders (Table 1 below).

	NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS	STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	TOTAL
NAG UK	9	27	19	55
NAG FR1	8	2	13	23
NAG FR2	8	10	24	42
NAG PT	1	6	11	18
NAG BG	17	16	3	36
NAG SI	11	7	11	29
NAG IT	17	6	12	35
TOTAL	71	74	93	238

Table 1. Individual stakeholders (people) involved in the SAS national advisory groups in the 6 partner countries

Project partners have identified 144 stakeholder institutions involved in the SAS project in the six countries. These institutions vary in terms of size, role, mission, scope, funding, and goals. A common feature, however, is that they are active in the field of education and /or volunteering. Some of them are also specially engaged in reducing or preventing the

rate of ESL in Europe. As shown in the table 2 below, the highest number of the institutions involved were associations / federations (50 institutions), NGOs / foundations (25 institutions) and schools (15 institutions). Other types of institutions involved were: city / region / province institutions (8 stakeholders), ministries (6 institutions), youth institutions (6 stakeholders), research institutions (6 stakeholders), international organisations (6 stakeholders), universities (5 stakeholders), adult education institutions (4 stakeholders), educative centres (2 stakeholders) and other institutions (11 stakeholders). Among the SAS key stakeholders, 14 institutions (out of 39) are associations / federations (in most cases, closely related to volunteering), and 10 institutions are schools. Both types of the dominant SAS key stakeholders, volunteering associations and schools were actively involved in the experimental phase of the SAS project (WP4) in most of the partner countries.

Type of institution	National Stakeholders	Strategic Stakeholders	Key Stakeholders	TOTAL
School	3	2	10	15
Association / Federation	23	13	14	50
NGO / Foundation	13	8	4	25
Ministry	3	2	1	6
City / Region / Province	2	2	4	8
University	1	2	2	5
Research	3	3		6
Adult education	2	1	1	4
Youth	6			6
Educative centre	1	1		2
International organisation	2	4		6
Other	6	2	3	11
TOTAL	65	40	39	144

Table 2. Type of stakeholder institutions

A further point worth making is that the institutions were mostly active at the local (68 stakeholders) and national level (55 stakeholders). As indicated in the table 3 below, 9 SAS

stakeholders work at the regional level, 3 at European level and 3 at international level.

Level	Local	Regional	National	European	International	Total
Number of stakeholder institutions	68	15	55	3	3	144

Table 3. Level of work of the stakeholder institutions

In addition to general categorisation of the SAS stakeholders into national, strategic and key stakeholders, the division between multipliers and mainstreamers was prepared at the end of the project according to both exploitation types (mainstreaming and multiplication) that were implemented. 49 individual stakeholders (out of 238) and 37 institutions (out of 144) were identified as mainstreamers (mainly strategic stakeholders, decision makers at local, regional and national levels, ministries, local authorities, gatekeepers, agenda setting NGOs and other institutions that play a substantial role in combating ESL). 189 individual stakeholders (out of 238) and 107 institutions (out of 144) were identified as multipliers (mainly key stakeholders, schools, associations, non-formal educators, universities, research institutes and youth organisations).

3. Establishing the network: meetings of the National Advisory Groups

As per contract the SAS team agreed to hold a series of NAG meetings with the purpose of establishing the network and of involving the stakeholders in a number of activities. Throughout the project, 35 meetings of the national advisory groups (stakeholder meetings) were organised and carried out in the six partner countries. The first national meetings were implemented in May 2013 and last ones in November 2014. 479 people attended those 35 national meetings. In addition to this, one stakeholder meeting (with 15 attendees) was carried out in the form of a European dissemination event in Brussels. All together, 494 people attended the 36 events.

The NAG meetings were organised to bring together experts and practitioners in the fields of education, volunteering and ESL to discuss the outcomes of the project, to inform the stakeholders of the various benefits of the project, to encourage the stakeholders to get involved actively in the project, to facilitate the implementation of the project, and to spread the SAS results among internal and external stakeholders and established network to ensure that the SAS results could be sustainably used as the basis for further research and applicative activities, new projects, and mentoring and training courses in other

context and beyond the lifetime of the project. For this reason, many of the stakeholder meetings were carried out with organisations, mentors, schools, teachers, volunteers and also young people.

Already in the initial version of the exploitation strategy, the general framework for implementation of NAGs meetings (including forms of the meetings, timeline and profiles of key participants) was defined. According for this plan, as shown in the figure 1 below, the four different meetings were planned: informative meetings (May and June 2013), consultative meetings (from July to December 2013), users' meetings (from July 2013 to September 2014), and sustainability meetings (from September 2014 to November 2014).



Fig. 1 Plan for national advisory groups meetings

In practice, different local, national, cultural, social and economic contexts in which the project was implemented, diverse groups of young people (ESLs, young people at risk and difficulties in school, refugee children), different educational background of mentors involved, and various compositions of the NAG in each country, have showed the need for more flexible approach. During the project progress when there was already evident that we will exceed the planned number of 24 stakeholder meetings, the initial exploitation strategy was upgraded with the distinction between informative meetings, meetings with key stakeholders (who actually had a consultative role and were involved in the experimental testing), and dissemination and sustainability meetings.

The flexibility of the exploitation strategy, diverse NAGs and the commitment of each project partner have resulted in quite varied forms of events that were organised. In addition to more classical meetings, also some workshops, seminars and celebration and festive events were organised, including the "SAS week", a common initiative of all project partners in October 2014

when the European dimension of the SAS project was emphasised in each participating country.

NAGs meetings were very relevant for the success of the project and the networking was engaging. Basically, the meetings and events had two functions. The first was reporting the progress of the project, including feedback of data on young people and mentors recruitment, experimental testing, outcomes and other issues or concerns that accompanied the progress of the project. The second function was to offer the participants the information about transferability of the SAS methodology, training modules and mentoring to other situations and contexts besides the project partners, young people and mentors who were involved in the testing of the SAS results. This balance of feedback, active role they had and future possibilities was a compellingly attractive, productive, effective and engaging combination for most stakeholders who invest their time to participate in those meetings.

4. Dynamics of the national advisory groups

The dynamics of the NAGs in each participating country was dependent on the dynamics of the development of the SAS project in each country. Generally, as was planned within the exploitation work package (WP 5), NAG meetings were closely connected to the SAS experimentation (WP 4), preparation of the training modules for young people (WP 2), mentoring (WP 3), and dissemination (WP 6). For this reason, many NAG meetings were organised to provide feedback and suggestions (consultative role) for those WPs (for example, on the national adaptation of the mentoring and training for young people).

Generally, as already mentioned above the 36 exploitation meetings implemented within the SAS project could be divided into 3 types:

- 8 informative meetings aimed at the general presentation of the SAS project and informing broader scope of the stakeholders (national, strategic and key stakeholders) about the SAS project. First national stakeholder / NAGs meetings that were organised by the project partners in the first months of the project are categorised as informative meetings. Those meetings were productive for engaging the stakeholders to get involved in the project and for recruiting the mentors and young people.
- 18 meetings with *key stakeholders* (especially with mentors, schools, associations and volunteering organisations) were organised in correlation to the SAS experimentation (WP 4), mentoring (WP 3) and training for young people (WP 2). Key stakeholders had the consultative role or have been directly involved in some project activities. Most of the meetings with key stakeholders were implemented in the middle of the project.

- 10 dissemination and sustainability meetings were implemented with the aim of transferring the results of the SAS project to decision-makers and strategic stakeholders (mainstreaming), convincing end-users and key stakeholders to adopt, to apply and/ or continue to use the results of the SAS project (multiplication), and to present the final results of the SAS project to national stakeholders and more general public. Dissemination and sustainability events were implemented in the last months of the SAS project, in October and November 2014.

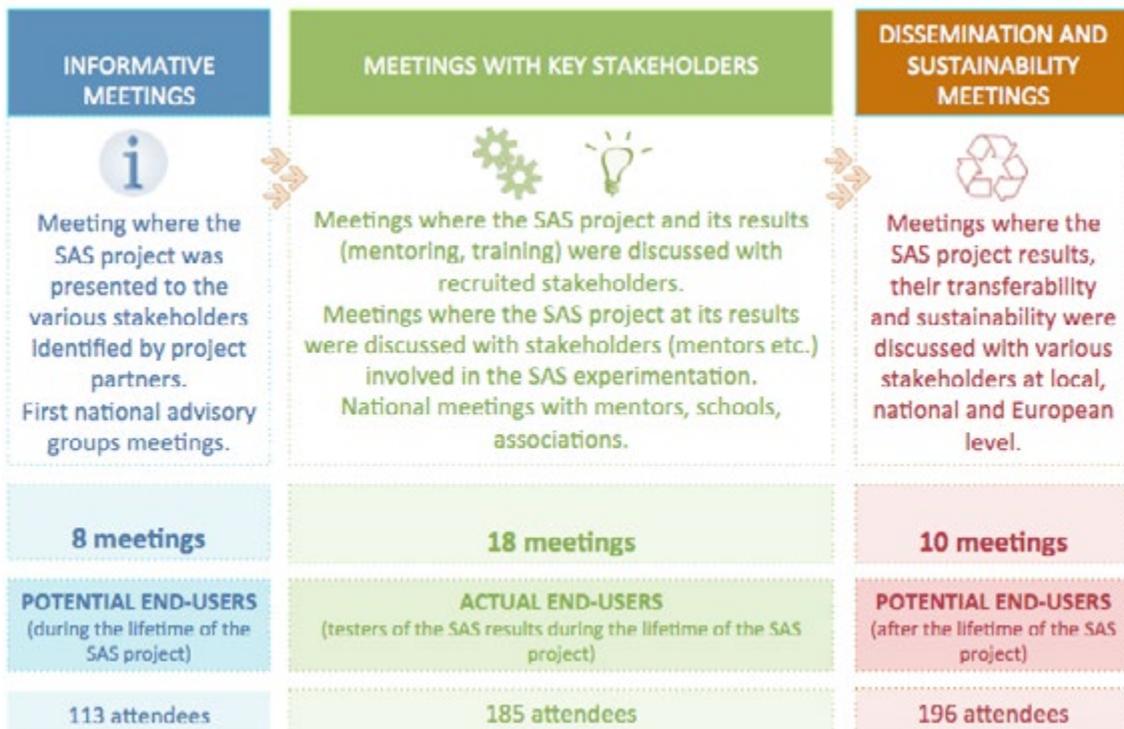


Fig. 2 Type of stakeholder meetings carried out in the 6 partner countries

According to this strategy for the involvement of the stakeholders and enhance the SAS project, 7 NAG meetings were organised in the period from May 2013 to July 2013 and they were mainly informative type meetings. 18 meetings were organised in the period from September 2013 to July 2014 and they were mainly meetings with key stakeholders. A further 11 meetings were organised in the period from September 2014 to November 2014 mainly for dissemination and sustainability purposes. Time dynamics of the stakeholder meetings within the SAS project is presented in the figure 3 below.



Fig.3 Time dynamics of the National Advisory Groups meetings

Participation and involvement of various types of stakeholders in the SAS project were different and consistent with the distinction between national stakeholders, strategic stakeholders and key stakeholders. The role of the national and strategic stakeholders was particularly related to the participation at the informative and dissemination / sustainability meetings. Therefore, their function within the SAS project was mainly strategic, consultative and supportive. In contrast, the involvement of the key stakeholders (the smaller number of selected stakeholders recruited for specific activities within the SAS project) was crucial for the success of the SAS project since they were actively involved especially in the experimental phase (WP4), the recruitment of the SAS mentors and young people, national adaptation of the mentoring (WP 3) and training for young people (WP 2). Therefore, the role of the key stakeholders was both consultative and participative. Figure 4 below outlines the details of the participation and involvement of the stakeholders in the SAS project. The figure also shows that informative meetings (carried out mainly at the start of the WP 5 implementation) and dissemination / sustainability meetings (carried out at the end of the project) have addressed the wider audience of the stakeholders than meetings with the key stakeholders (carried out in the middle of the project).

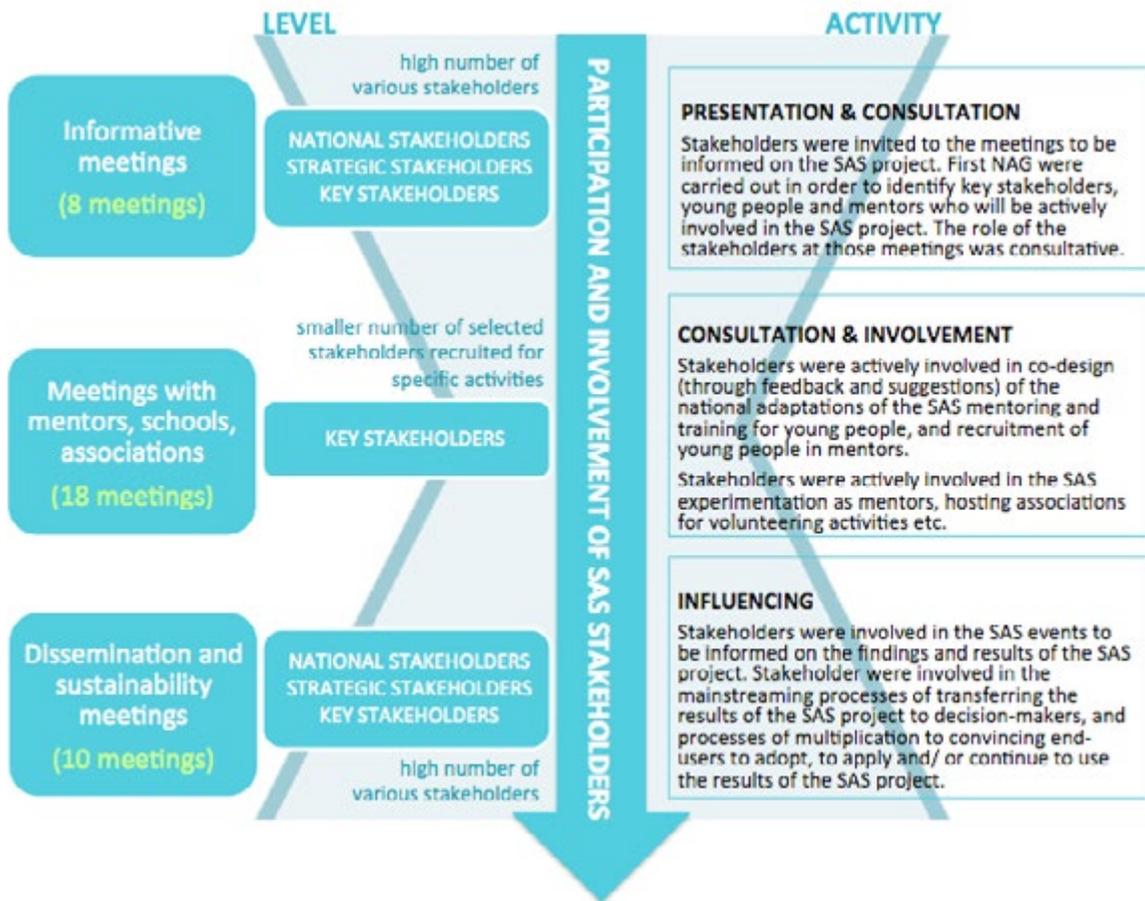


Fig. 4 Participation and involvement of stakeholders within the SAS project

5. Conclusions on the implementation of the exploitation activities

The exploitation strategy for the SAS project was a product of a 17-months process of development and the productive collaboration among the project partners. Meetings of the NAGs and with stakeholders identified and mapped in the seven national lists of stakeholders were the most regularly and commonly used exploitation tool within the SAS project. Diversity of those meetings, composition of the NAGs in each participating country and contexts in which the SAS project results were experimentally tested were very promising prospect for the future of the SAS project.

The issues of the sustainability and transferability of the SAS results were from the beginning of the project one of the main challenges discussed at each European partner

meeting. Actually, thanks to the “SAS week” and other sustainability and dissemination events that were carried out in the participating countries and in Brussels (European dissemination event where also the SAS policy recommendations entitled “Success at School” – Moving the ESL agenda forward. Policy recommendations and project sustainability” were presented), the sustainability of the SAS project was ensured. In the last months of the SAS project some project partners already ensured that some results will be re-used by other scientific and applicative activities implemented by the project partners themselves, key stakeholders who were involved in the experimental testing of the SAS results or other end-users in different situations and contexts.

As part of the sustainability plan of the University of Northampton, students and academics are working at setting up a social enterprise to continue providing a valuable service to the young people, and one school is working with the university to embed a Changemaker certificate as part of the volunteering experience. Iriv Conseil has managed that the SAS training for young people and mentoring will be repeated in the school year 2014/15 at the school Collège Blaise Pascal in Massy, Essone. The City Hall of Massy offered to welcome the young people who willing to be volunteers. A first session was already held in the College Blaise Pascal in November 2014 and 3 the sessions were organised in January 2015. Due to the great enthusiasm expressed by youngsters, the action will be extended to the end of June 2015. ASSFAM, the second French partner will continue with the SAS training for young people and mentoring after the lifetime of the SAS project in Marcel Cachin High School in Paris. The new cycle of ASSFAM activities has a meaningful and disseminative name “SAS 2”. Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology from the University Institute of Lisbon (CIES-IUL) is planning to work together with national stakeholders that might be interested in including mentoring and/or volunteering in their institutional practices and programmes, but the concrete steps and institutions were not defined during the lifetime of the SAS project. CERMES from New Bulgarian University who tested the SAS training and mentoring with refugee children did not defined the concrete next steps for applying the SAS methodology during the duration of the project, but according to the general very positive feedback from local stakeholders, there is possibility to find ways for further joint work. A concrete idea might come out already in the event (planned early in 2015) where the SAS e-book will be presented. Ergo Institute will continue to collaborate with the Bob Institute in comprehensive reengagement programme for ESLs after the lifetime of the SAS project. University of Bologna will continue to collaborate with the Secondary School “Aldrovandi-Rubbiani” and the Education and School Services Office of the San Donato-Pilastro District in a new “Community School” project against dropout. After the conclusion of the project, in December 2014, second seminar with the title “School Dropout. Local Experiences and European Experimentations” was carried out at the Department of Educational Studies in Bologna where new stakeholders expressed their will to test the experimentation model in other settings. In addition, following the model tested

through the SAS project, the University of Bologna will continue to implement mentors' recruitment among university trainees and graduating students who will collaborate with local stakeholders (welfare and education institutions, voluntary associations).

Those concrete activities by project partners and stakeholders would contribute to the sustainability of the SAS project. For this reason, the stakeholder engagement cycle for the SAS project could be schematised in a way showed by the figure 5 below.

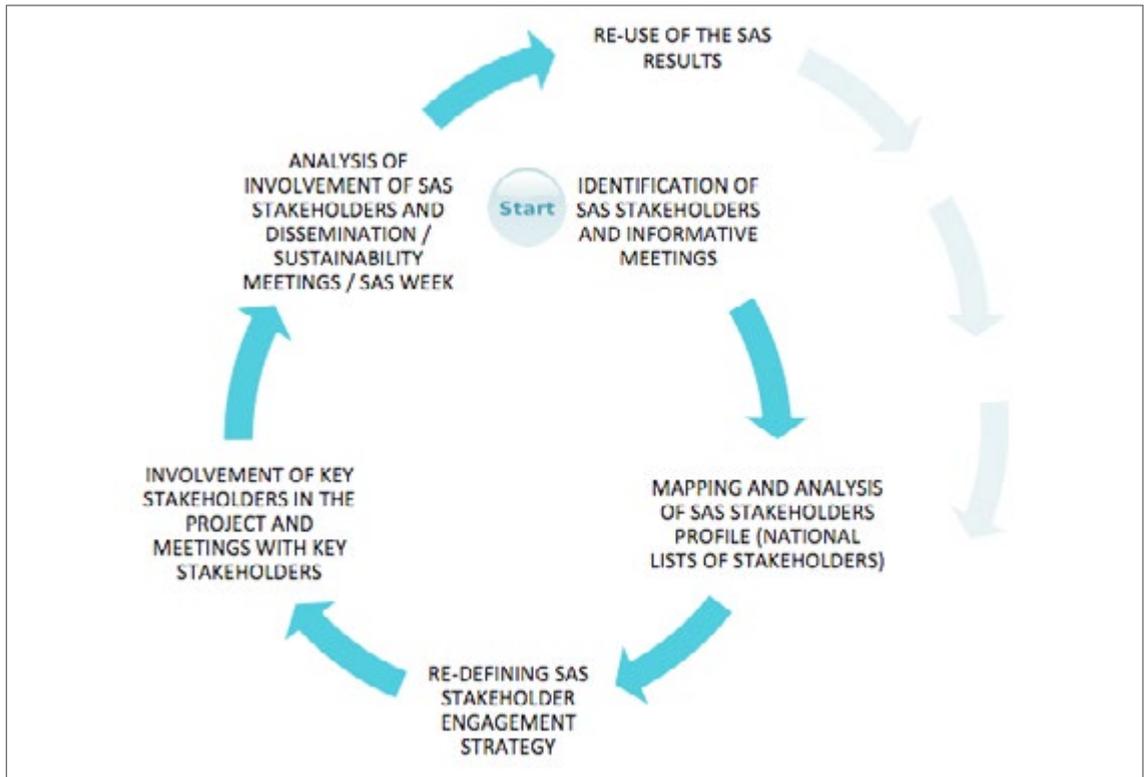


Fig. 5 Stakeholder engagement cycle

In addition to above mentioned concrete activities that had in some cases already started right after the completion of the SAS project or in the beginning of the year 2015, the important future end-users of the SAS results and messengers of SAS sustainability are mentors who were trained in the SAS methodology. The training and the mentoring experience provided them tools and competences they could use in their professional career and future work with young people in other situations and contexts beyond the SAS project.

Within the SAS project, transferability of the project results was understood as the process of applying the results of research to other situations and contexts. Because only those people who have detailed information about the project could perform transferability, in the SAS project two ways were used to introduce the project to people not directly involved in the project. The first way was to organise the sustainability and dissemination events, including the “SAS week” with stakeholders and (potential) re-users of the SAS results. The second way was to prepare a highly detailed description of the SAS research situations, methodology and case studies that are available to potential end-users especially in this e-book and also in other outputs of the dissemination work package. Because process of transferability usually starts when stakeholders (in the first case) or readers (in the second case) find the similarities between the specifics of the research or project situation and the specifics of the context or situation with which they are familiar, they may relate the findings to their own situations. In other words, they “transfer” the results to another context. Results of any kind of research or projects can be applied to other situations, but qualitative research methods such as fieldwork and case studies are the most relevant because the detailed contextual and background information (about the situation in which the work was undertaken) they contain, make them easy to adapt and adopt in other situations or contexts. In order to make the transferability of the SAS results easy and user-friendly, the SAS project partners have included in the project’s results the following information:

- the number, profiles and location of institutions taking part in the project (project partners and stakeholders),
- the number, profiles and location of people and institutions involved in the experimental testing (fieldwork),
- the number and length of the training sessions and mentoring within the experimental testing,
- the information about the local / national situations and contexts where the project was implemented,
- the data collection methods that were employed.

Both pivotal transferable results that were produced within the SAS project, the training modules for young people in volunteering, and the prototype of mentoring, were experimentally tested in the period of 6 months with 340 people (145 mentors and 195 young people). This experimental testing showed that the SAS results are transferable and useful:

- in diverse national, local, cultural, social and economic context. Both results were tested in 6 different countries (UK, France, Portugal, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Italy) and in 7 different European cities that differ in size and geographical location (Northampton (UK), Evry, Essone (France), Paris (France), Lisbon (Portugal), Sofia (Bulgaria), Ljubljana (Slovenia), and Bologna (Italy)),
- for diverse groups of young people; for ESLs, those at risk and difficulties in school, and refugee children (who are also out-of school),
- for professional and non-professional mentors,
- in formal education (schools) and non-formal education (associations, NGOs, adult education).

CHAPTER 7:

SAS Dissemination Strategies: Communication as Dialogue and Bridging

Ildiko Otova and Vanya Ivanova

To ensure the viability and feasibility of the Success at School (SAS) Project, a number of Workpackages were created. One of such Workpackages dealt with the dissemination and sustainability of the project. It was led by CERMES, at the Bulgarian New University in Sofia. This chapter gives an overview of the dissemination “philosophy” and strategy of the SAS Project, and the achievements of the project both internationally and nationally. It will cover the international dimension, grouping the various settings, targets and tools; then giving examples from all national contexts, exploring the novelties and synergies.

1. Introduction. “Philosophy” behind the dissemination: amplification and intensification

This first part explains the philosophy of the dissemination, which was based on the idea of amplifying and intensifying the strategies and the tools at our disposal. The dissemination was understood by the partners of the project as a process encompassing all stages of the project from its inception to its conclusion and beyond with the purpose of bringing to light the key message of the SAS project - promoting volunteering and mentoring as alternative ways of re-engaging youngster who are at risk of dropping out of school or who happened to be early school leavers (ESL).

Dissemination comes from the Latin noun 'disseminatio' meaning to disseminate, scatter seed, or broadcast. It is understood as the act of sending information to the public without expecting feedback from the target groups in focus. The understanding of "dissemination" within the SAS project was different in several ways. On one hand, the partners viewed dissemination as a process that was closely connected to all the other activities in the project. Each part or Workpackage was seen as a means to spread further the ideas and achievements of the project. At the same time the dissemination process was also seen as a means to foster active dialogue and communication with the stakeholders, that is, young people, mentors, schools and voluntary associations. This general understanding will be further elaborated especially in the section focusing on the synergies and novelties. The purpose was to provide a consistent and strong articulation of the project across its various activities both at the national, European and international level. Hence, the SAS project developed a three-pronged strategy in which each aspect of the dissemination was interlinked and closely connected. The three interconnected levels were:

- Dissemination as 'spreading the seeds'
- Dissemination as a visibility act
- Dissemination as dialogue and bridge

Dissemination as 'spreading the seeds' was done mainly through the website (www.successatschool.eu), leaflets, conference attendance, and the use of other digital means such as a facebook page created by the Bulgarian partners; a blog, created by Iriv, one of our two partners in France, and a Linkedin group page.

Dissemination as a visibility act included a number of branding activities, such as the creation of the logo. Further marketing activities focused on making the SAS project easily recognisable among the international partners and the local partners. In this regard the first and the second levels were closely related.

Dissemination as dialogue and bridge was part of the 'exploitation' process. It worked by fulfilling two interlinked aims: to bridge the gap between the project partners and their stakeholders; and, to link all the Workpackages so as to improve the internal communication as well.

2. Strategies for dissemination

In order to achieve these three levels of dissemination different strategies were introduced and applied in the SAS project. They cover the project frame but also go beyond in search

for innovative approaches.

2.1. Project frame

This section presents the project frame and its milestones for dissemination as they were outlined in the project proposal. The dissemination milestones set in the SAS project included producing or setting up the following:

- Leaflet;
- Website;
- Facebook profiles/weblog;
- Articles in specialised journals;
- Final e-book.

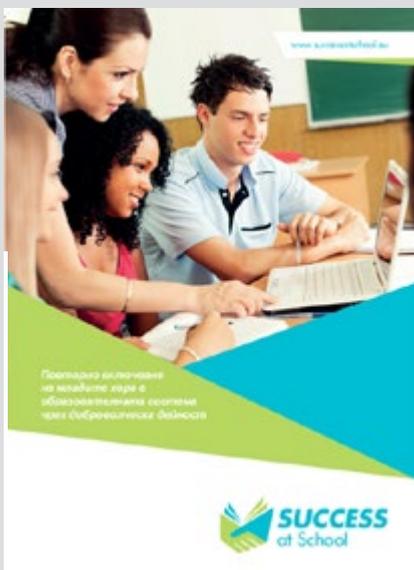
Except for the e-book, the other tools listed are the most common, useful and important ones used by nearly all European projects, in a way they are “a must”. During the lifespan of the project, and especially during the European meetings, we have strived to find innovative ways of enriching these tools, following one of our main principles “the more we produce, the more we disseminate”. This search for innovation was also the result of engaging with our main target group – the young people - and therefore asking ourselves which tools and ways of communication were most appropriate to reach young people. Thus, on one side, we were fulfilling the set targets mentioned above, in line with the idea of dissemination as spreading the seeds and a visibility act. At the same time we produced materials to create a space for dialogue further reinforcing the ideas of the SAS project. It is important to note that the dissemination activities were carried out by all the partners, coordinated by the CERMES/NBU team and by the project’s leader, the team at the University of Northampton that was in charge of coordinating several of the activities such as designing the leaflet and creating the website.

The following table illustrates the planned and achieved results of the dissemination. The achievements will be further elaborated later in the text.

Planned

Leaflet translated in all the national languages

Achieved



Project website

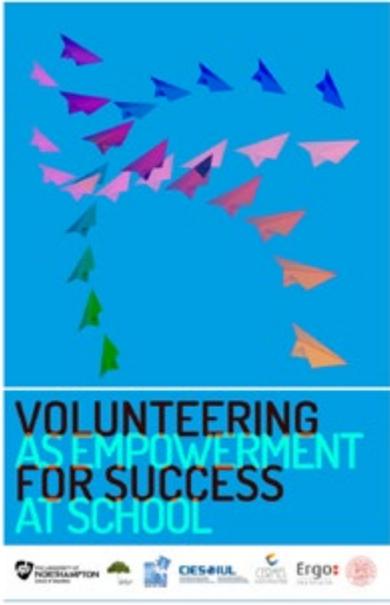
www.successatschool.eu



The project website is regularly updated by the University of Northampton.

Facebook profiles/weblog

- Facebook profile was created by the Bulgarian partner (CERMES).
- A Weblog was created by the French partner IRIV.

Planned	Achieved
Articles in specialised journals or websites in the field of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simona Bezjak and Eva Klemenčič, Learning active citizenship through volunteering in compulsory basic education in Slovenia. <i>Traditiones</i>, July 2014 (Peer-reviewed journal) • Benedicte Halba, Volunteering - from altruism to • Otherness, <i>Šolsko polje</i>, September 2014 (Peer-reviewed journal) • Simona Bezjak Re-engaging Early School Leavers for Success at School: Meeting the Needs of Youth with Alternative Educational Approaches, <i>Šolsko polje</i>, September 2014 (Peer-reviewed journal)
Final e-book Volunteering as Empowerment for Success at School	
Partners' institutional websites	Each partner posted information about the project on their organizational websites, thus spreading the idea of the project further among their local partners. It is hard to calculate how many people were informed about the project, but we believe that there are hundreds in each of the countries.
Local stakeholders' websites	The Centre de Ressources Politiques de le Ville, for example, developed special pages on its website to present the SAS project, including the goals of the project together with the steps of its experimentation in Essonne to be implemented together with iriv, the CRPVE and the City hall of Massy (Benedicte Halba).

Planned	Achieved
Presentations at international conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SAS project was presented at 2 conferences: • EAPRIL Conference in Bienne, Switzerland, November 2013 • <i>“Youngsters at Risk”- Learning through volunteering. An alternative way to reengage in education youngsters facing difficulties at school</i>, Dr Bénédicte Halba, Iriv. • ECER 2014 conference, Porto, Portugal, September 2014 • <i>Shaping the Future of Educational Research: Collaboration between Academics and Project Managers</i> - Paul Bramble, Cristina Devecchi and Julian Brown, University of Northampton • <i>Bridging the Gap, Enhancing Knowledge and Practice: Academics and ‘Blended’ Professionals Working Together at the Success at School Project</i>, Morgan, C., Devecchi, C., Norton, L., Brown, J., Bramble, P., University of Northampton • <i>Curricular and International Civic and Citizenship Education Study Dataset Analysis of Learning Active Citizenship Through Volunteering: The Case of Slovenia</i>, by Eva Klemenčič, Simona Bezjak and Plamen Mirazchyski.
Presentations at national conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulvia Antonelli, University of Bologna presented a paper on school dropout and SAS Experimentation at the Aisea (Italian Association of Anthropology) Congress in Rome, September 2014. • Albina Khasanzyanova (from the CEREP) presented the SAS project during a symposium organized by the University of Dijon (IREDU) on non formal and informal learning. The feedback was very positive among the participants. The proceedings of the symposium should be published. • Julian Brown and Cristina Devecchi, University of Northampton presented a paper at the Student Voice Conference, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, 25 June 2014 • Cristina Devecchi, Paul Bramble, Julian Brown & Richard Rose gave a talk titled ‘Success at school: making a change through volunteering’ at the Changemaker Week, University of Northampton, 14-13 October 2013
Contests and awards The contest “Mozaique des talents”	A school contest in a region of Paris, in which 9 schools participated. ASSFAM with the children who took part in the experimentation of the SAS project won the prize “Talent of civic and solidarity involvement”.

Planned	Achieved
Videos	Video of the presentation of SAS project by the youngsters for the contest “Mozaïque des talents”, prepared by ASSFAM’s partner “Plaine Commune Promotion”. https://www.facebook.com/mosaique.detalents?fref=ts http://www.assfam.org/spip.php?article1885 http://vimeo.com/95042393
Media coverage	News about the project was published in different newspapers in Bulgaria and Slovenia, and on the University of Northampton news page
SAS weeks	Presentation of the project during the SAS weeks, including celebration events during which the young people were given a certificate of participation in all partner countries
Meeting policy makers in Brussels at a European level	Cristina Devecchi, Julian Brown, Paul Bramble, Magali Cias and Samira Youssef (ASSFAM) and three mentors from the University of Northampton represented the SAS team in Brussels where they presented a list of recommendations titled “Success at School” – Moving the ESL agenda forward. Policy recommendations and project sustainability’

Table 1: Philosophy in practice

As the project went underway, the dissemination activities exceeded the initially planned ones, going far beyond than what was expected.

2.2. Diversification of target groups

In this section the different target groups of the project will be presented. The target groups of the dissemination of the SAS project included:

- the stakeholders of the exploitation part (institutions, schools, universities, NGOs, grassroots initiatives;
- the target groups of the experimentation - mentors and youngsters; and,
- the wider public and media.

Since in some cases the project partners worked with local partners who could link them with the young people, or who could help them with networking with associations, new

target groups emerged in the various national contexts. A special emphasis was given to the young people themselves although this approach varied across the partners' countries.

2.2.1. Sensitivity to the national contexts

As mentioned above the main target group of the SAS project were the youngsters at risk of leaving school or those who had already left school, both potential drop-outs and ESL. In the case of Bulgaria, however, a new target group emerged, namely, refugee children. These were a very vulnerable target group that came to be due to the latest migration wave as a result of the war in Syria. Sensitive to this topic, the Bulgarian partner (CERMES) focused its efforts on it. More information can be read in the chapter of the Bulgarian case studies part of the e-book. This flexibility is quite important to make the project work and provide help for the most vulnerable groups at risk of drop-out.

Another dimension of this flexibility is the way in which the main partnerships were created in the different contexts. In the case of Bulgaria the direct link to the refugee children was the Integration Centre of the State Agency for Refugees. The collaboration with this Agency included cooperation with the students who volunteered and were trained as mentors, and also other NGOs and community organizations who took part in the whole process of experimentation. In the Italian case a very active partnership was created with several schools in a deprived area of Bologna. IRIV, on the other hand, worked in close collaboration with the local authority of Massey in France. The Portuguese partner CIES included in their stakeholders team a cultural association, the local Theatre for the Social Inclusion and Culture of Optimism. ERGO Institute in Slovenia focused its efforts on an older group who had already left school; ASSFAM drew from their previous contacts and Northampton forged a relationship with the University Centre for Employability and Engagement within the University of Northampton.

All those examples give an overview on how the work was adapted to the national context of each partner. This also explains the variety of dissemination tools used by the SAS project partners as they tried to reach a diverse set of partners and stakeholders.

2.3. Diversification and creation of tools

In every European project the flexibility of the projects to fit to the national contexts is crucial. This is valid also for the dissemination activities and the choice of the tools. This gives the opportunity for further exchange among the partners through their specific expertise and focus of work. Therefore this section will review both the common and specific tools used throughout the project.

2.3.1. Common tools

The analysis of the dissemination activities that happened in all the six partner countries shows that the most common approach employed by all the partners, beside the **project website**, the **organizational websites** and the **leaflets**, were **meetings**. In all the countries many meetings took place between the members of the country teams and local partners, stakeholders, schools, NGOs, and others who could be of support to the project. Some of the meetings were bilateral, others were with groups of people. Each meeting had the aim to spread further the general idea of the project, besides fulfilling other tasks, such as, recruiting mentors or preparing experimentation activities.

Another common tool for dissemination was spreading the word about the project during all the **trainings** and **seminars** implemented during the project. All the partners disseminated the final results of the project during the **SAS week** in their country through different **celebration activities** focusing on the certification ceremonies for both mentors and youngsters.

2.3.2. Specific tools

Several unique opportunities emerged during the SAS project that were seized by the partners. One of them was the contest “Mozaïque des talents” in which 300 people from 9 schools in Paris participated.. ASSFAM and the young people who took part in the experimentation of the SAS project won the prize “talent of civic and solidarity involvement”. This illustrates how entering and winning a national context can provide beneficial opportunities to further inform both the target groups and the broader public about the project idea.

Another example of the flexible and innovative way in which various means were used was the use of a Facebook profile by the Bulgarian team at CERMES. Iriv, alternatively, made use of welblogs (iriv, www.iriv.net, www.iriv-vaeb.net, www.iriv-publications.net, <http://sas-essonne.blogspot.fr/>). Other examples are the University of Northampton’s creation of a profile of the project in the LinkedIn professional network and the use of the University’ marketing channels to publicise events related to the project. The diversification of tools mirrored the individual partners’ experiences while at the same time functioning as a means for mutual learning between the partners. More information about social media will come in the following sections.

3. Achievements

This part will give an overview of the achievements both at international and national level.

All the initiatives will be clustered and analyzed in terms of outreach and sustainability perspective.

As seen in the previous parts of the chapter the SAS project partners fulfilled all the objectives outlined in the initial proposal. This part will describe only the added value.

3.1. International

Being a team composed by partners coming not only from the nongovernmental sector but also from academia, one of the important dimensions of the achievements of the SAS project is the scientific one.

Among the biggest academic success of the SAS project is the participation in several important and influential conferences in the field of educational studies and social sciences. The first one is the European Educational Research Association (ECER) conference in 2014 in Porto where Dr Cristina Devecchi and several members of the University of Northampton team took part.

The meetings of the national advisory group of the SAS project in Slovenia opened up the discussion about the educational impact of volunteering, interconnection between volunteering and active citizenship and involvement of volunteering themes in compulsory basic education in Slovenia. The discussion provided an important theoretical basis for the implementation of the experimental phase of the SAS project in Slovenia. The Ergo institute in collaboration with the stakeholders from the Educational Research Institute and IEA DPC resulted in a joint poster presentation with the title "Curricular and International Civic and Citizenship Education Study Dataset Analysis of Learning Active Citizenship Through Volunteering: The Case of Slovenia" at ECER 2014 conference. The presentation that includes also a part of findings from the SAS project was co-authored by Eva Klemenčič, Simona Bezjak and Plamen Mirazchiyski.

Dr. Benedicte Halba from Irv participated in the EAPRIL Conference in Bienne (Switzerland) in November 2013. The constituency for this event was composed of teachers and professionals in the field of educational sciences. This international network was created in 2006 by University teachers in the Netherlands and includes many experts in the Lifelong Learning (LLL) field.

Apart from the scientific results the SAS partners decided to find a way to inform policymakers on European level of the findings of the project. A very important event for the sustainability of the SAS project was the meeting in Brussels organized on November

21. During it, Dr Cristina Devecchi as the project leader, and partners from the University of Northampton and ASSFAM represented the SAS partners' project with a presentation of the project alternative approach, the project development and results, and some policy recommendations to members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission and to important NGOs working in the field of education.

3.2. National

As mentioned above the different contexts explain the various ways in which the partners worked to disseminate and promote the project.

Some of the partners had great successes promoting the project in scientific milieu. Fulvia Antonelli from the University of Bologna team presented a paper on school dropout and SAS Experimentation at the Aisea (Italian Association of Anthropology) Congress in Rome (25th-27th of September). Benedicte Halba from Iriv presented the SAS at the University of Reims Champagne Ardenne as an example of European project allowing identifying and evaluation of pupils.

Dr Cristina Devecchi and Julian Brown gave a paper on the challenges of accessing young people at the international Student Voice conference at the University of Cambridge, in June 2014. They also took part in the Changemaker Week event organised by the University of Northampton to share good practice in relation to examples of social innovation and social impact.

Several national articles were also published. The latest issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Šolsko polje*, one of the leading journals in the field of education in Slovenia, contains a special thematic section on early school leaving, where the article with the findings from the SAS project in Slovenia was published. The article with the title "Ponovno vključevanje zgodnjih osipnikov za uspeh v šoli: zadovoljevanje potreb mladih z alternativnimi pedagoškimi pristopi" ("Re-engaging Early School Leavers for Success at School: Meeting the Needs of Youth with Alternative Educational Approaches") written by Dr Simona Bezjak (Ergo institute) deals with the alternative pedagogical approaches that have been shown in practice to be successful in re-engaging early school leavers. The article is based on the results of the SAS project and experimental study among the thirty early school leavers in Slovenia. The article explores the potential of volunteering as the alternative pedagogical approach, and suggests that especially the participative, flexible and dynamical educational approaches that are based on the preferences and needs of young people are more effective than traditional pedagogical approaches. Assfam published an article *Success at school ou réussir à l'école à travers le bénévolat* in "Debout"

magazine printed in 170 000 copies.

Meeting highlevel policymakers is of great importance for project dissemination and sustainability. Ergo Institute organized a meeting with the Slovenian minister of Education. Minister Dr Jernej Pikalo gave a statement about early school leaving issue in Slovenia and Dr Simona Bezjak (Ergo institute) gave a statement about the SAS project. The meeting was widely covered by different national media.

Local authorities are also an important stakeholder and partner in the development of the policies for tackling early school leaving. Some of the partners managed to organize or to participate in events with representatives of municipalities or other local institutions. The Portuguese partners organized a meeting with Câmara Municipal de Odivelas-Projeto SEI to present the SAS project and to invite them to involve in the project activities. Assfam participated in a forum organized by the Region Ile de France. It aimed to share educational actions realized to reduce the school dropout with the participation of members of the regional council, several associations and youngsters giving testimonies about their experiences. The SAS project was presented in this context of policymakers, practitioners and young people.

As part of the SAS week in Slovenia, the Ergo institute participated at the big festival on intergenerational cooperation and volunteering in the cultural and congress centre Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana. Institute Hevreka, the co-organiser of the festival and one of the Slovenian stakeholders of the SAS project with extensive experiences in the field of volunteering, hosted an information point about the SAS project for the volunteers, educators, schools and general public.

CERMES promoted the project through its established networks with foreign cultural institutions like the British Council and the French Institute (Institut Francais). British Council invited CERMES to organize one of the events with the refugee children during the Sofia Science Festival where the SAS project was presented to a large public. The French Institute not only hosted one of the sessions of the Sofia's partners meeting but also promoted the project through its large network of partners among them also the AMOPA association.

4. Novelties and synergies

In this part of the analysis the innovative, creative and synergetic effects of the dissemination strategies of the SAS project will be explored. A special highlight will be put on the role of the new social media seen as one of the important novelties in the dissemination

activities proposed by the partners. Finally, it will reveal the direct connections between the dissemination, experimentation and exploitation work based on the synergetic logic led the whole dissemination process.

4.1. Novelties: New media, new methods

One of the important novelties in the project dissemination activities is the introduction of new social media as a tool. A recent publication of the European Neighborhood Info Centre states:

Regular media is a one-way street – you can read a newspaper or listen to a report on television, but have very limited opportunity to give your thoughts on the matter. Social media, on the other hand, is a web-based two-way street that gives you the opportunity to communicate and get into contact with people you know or who share some of your interests. Your virtual community is not only a place to find information, but also a place to organize events, express your opinions, share your photos, meet new people, promote your work, participate in campaigns and much more¹.

The website (www.successatschool.eu) and the weblog proposed by the French partner Iriv (sas-essonne.blogspot.fr) represent a more classical and static way to create an on-line presence of the SAS project. As a result of the willingness to open the project activities towards more diverse public, including youngsters, and to create more interactive and dialogical way to communicate some of the partners decided to launch a Facebook profile. The SAS project is represented also on LinkedIn – the biggest and most popular professional network - searching to reach experts, institutions representatives and other possible stakeholders in the field of education. Both networks are influential. According to Statistic Brain² in 2014 Facebook has 1.3 billion users and LinkedIn 277 million users.

4.1.1. Facebook profile as a tool to disseminate the project

In the recent years social media and especially Facebook have affected the social life and activity of people in various ways. This statement is even more valid when youngsters are concerned. Many researchers in the field of the social sciences introduced the notion of digital natives or the Facebook generation. The social behaviour of the young people is highly influenced by the e-tools and the possibility to stay connected. With its availability on different mobile devices, Facebook allows users to continuously stay in touch with their

¹ Neighbourhood Info Centre (2014) Using social media: A handbook for EU-funded projects. Available at: <http://www.enpi-info.eu/files/publications/Social%20Media%20Handbook%20ENG%20Final.pdf>

² <http://www.statisticbrain.com/>

acquaintances wherever in the world, as long as access to the Internet is available.

When speaking and dealing with early school leavers one of the important issues is to start speaking their own language. Thus using social media, which is part of the daily life of the young people and their normal way of communicating, is crucial for entering their social milieu. Facebook can also unite people with common interests through groups and pages. The role of social media in promoting different causes or initiatives is crucial nowadays. Thus two of the reasons why the Bulgarian partner CERMES launched a Facebook page of the SAS project could be summarized as follows:

- Reaching the youngsters as a public of the dissemination;
- Promoting in an innovative and effective way the project activities.

A small summary may show that all posts at the Facebook SAS page reached a relative high number of people and some of them more than thousand people - a number unreachable through other means of dissemination. One can say that the most "liked" posts are those of photos of the events organized during the different states of the project. One of the reasons is that the participants – mentors, youngsters, stakeholders – themselves also share the posts and reached their own circle of acquaintances. One of the strongest outputs of the use of social media as a dissemination tool is this domino effect.

The picture below shows the reach of the posts on the Facebook page during a month period from mid-September to mid-October 2014.

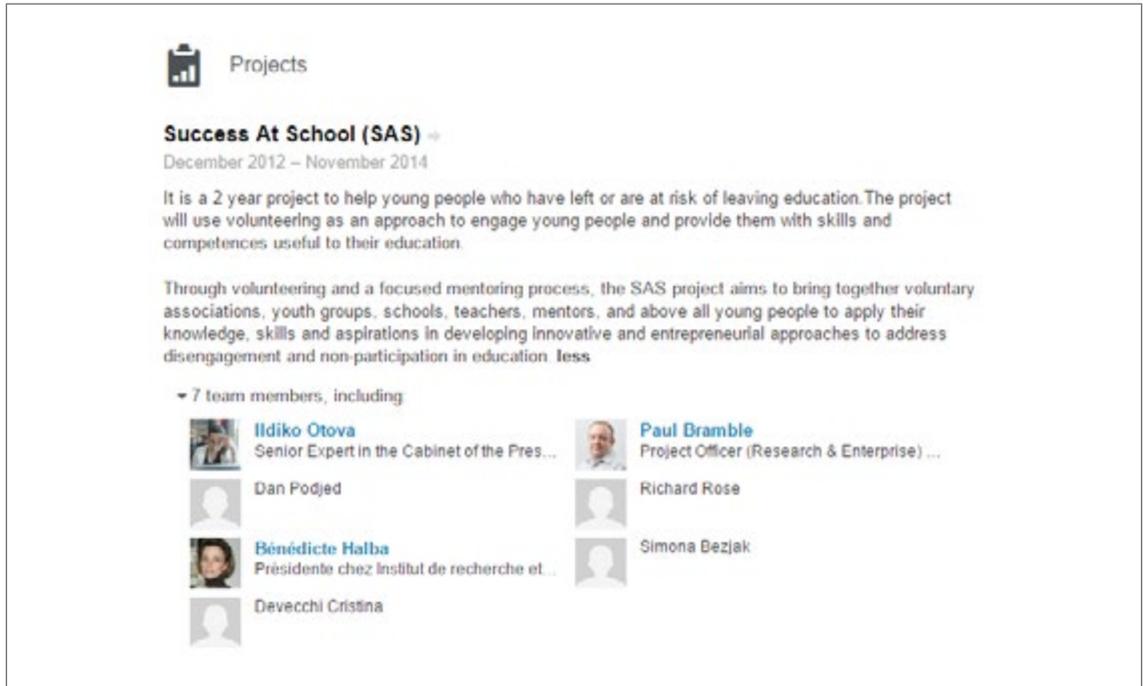
Your 5 Most Recent Posts							
Published	Post	Type	Targeting	Reach	Engagement	Promote	
13/10/2014 09:46	 Усмивки, танци, споделена топлина с децата-бежанци.	Image	Public	29	68 1	Boost Post	
13/10/2014 09:43	 И може би най-милото призвание, непринудено, от устата на дете: "Много е хубаво тук с вас."	Image	Public	1.1K	795 57	Boost Post	
12/10/2014 19:47	 Success at School - SAS Bulgaria shared Cermes's post.	Text	Public	29	14 7	Boost Post	
24/09/2014 09:27	 Поредния вторник, който споделихме с нашите малки приятели! Такива вторници имат	Text	Public	28	21 5	Boost Post	
16/09/2014 19:00	 Днес с деца и младежи бежанци отбелязахме началото на новата учебна година – рисувахме любимото	Text	Public	481	119 35	Boost Post	

CERMES, the Bulgarian partner in the project, also uses their own Facebook page. By sharing the posts of the SAS page or posting updates for the development of the SAS project on the Facebook profile of the research center, CERMES promotes the activities and informed potential stakeholders and partners.

4.1.2. The professional network LinkedIn

LinkedIn is more business-oriented social media. Launched in 2003 it represents nowadays the largest professional network.

The SAS project is represented by a short description and a direct link to the website visible on the personal profile of each of the members of the team having a registration on LinkedIn.



The screenshot shows a LinkedIn project page titled "Success At School (SAS)". The project duration is listed as "December 2012 – November 2014". The description states: "It is a 2 year project to help young people who have left or are at risk of leaving education. The project will use volunteering as an approach to engage young people and provide them with skills and competences useful to their education." A further paragraph explains: "Through volunteering and a focused mentoring process, the SAS project aims to bring together voluntary associations, youth groups, schools, teachers, mentors, and above all young people to apply their knowledge, skills and aspirations in developing innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to address disengagement and non-participation in education. less". Below the description, it lists "7 team members, including" and displays profile cards for: Ildiko Otova (Senior Expert in the Cabinet of the Pres...), Paul Bramble (Project Officer (Research & Enterprise) ...), Dan Podjed, Richard Rose, Bénédicte Halba (Présidente chez Institut de recherche et ...), and Devecchi Cristina.

Several contacts were created through the network with interested stakeholders and potential partners. LinkedIn has a considerable influence in professional groups in the field of education, migration and European policies. Representatives of those groups contacted members of the team demonstrating interest in the SAS project activities. In such a way the project was not just promoted but also built a solid base for future development and potential continuation in various ways.

An important conclusion is that social media has a high potential in dissemination activities. In the coming years it will have even a bigger influence in promoting results and creating sustainability of the European projects.

4.2. Synergies

Among the principal strategic logics leading the dissemination process of the SAS project is the idea of creating synergies. This synergetic approach allows not only the multiplication of the tools to promote the project's ideas and messages but also their openness and creativeness.

4.2.1. Experimentation, exploitation, dissemination

As every project, the SAS project has a strict logic dividing the activities in different work packages. Having in mind this but also searching for a more synergetic approach the partners decided to use each stage of the project to disseminate and promote the idea and the achievements of their work.

The experimentation, exploitation and dissemination processes were going hand in hand through the whole project.

The training sessions on volunteering with the mentors were closely linked to the following experimentation and the experimentation itself had the aim to reach not only the focus target groups, but also the larger public.

On other hand each stakeholders meeting turned in a possibility not only to create a strategic partnership but also to disseminate the project results and main ideas in terms of discussing, debating and enriching them.

A great success of the SAS project was the SAS week. This event that happened in all the partner countries was a clear example of the whole idea of creating synergies between working packages and between national and international contexts.

4.2.2. European meetings: an occasion for dissemination

Seen as a potential occasion for promoting the project the European partners meetings turned into important dissemination events.

For example the 3rd SAS partners' meeting held in Bologna was an opportunity to introduce

to the European partners some of the Bologna stakeholders involved in the SAS project and to introduce some of the settings where the experimentation will be carried out. At the same time, some meetings organized by UNIBO in key settings (Secondary School “Aldini Valeriani”, trip to the Pilastro district, meeting with local associations, meeting with people in charge of local government education services) allowed a fruitful discussion on the issues of school drop-out and school failure.

The Sofia meeting started with a large dissemination meeting hosted by the House of Europe and the Representation of the European Parliament in Bulgaria. In this important two hours’ workshop the members of the team from the different countries presented the idea and the results of the SAS project in the presence of representatives of international cultural institutions as British Council and the French Institute in Sofia, local NGOs and grassroots initiatives, and migrants associations. This meeting was important not only in terms of collecting feedback from experts and institutions but also in terms of promoting the SAS project and creating a sustainability opportunities for the future.

5. Conclusion and general recommendations

As learning output of the dissemination strategies we would like to emphasize to several important logics that we followed during the SAS dissemination and found very useful and enriching the joint experience. We summarized them in five key messages:

- Dissemination from visibility to dialogue and bridge;
- The more we produce, the more we disseminate;
- Diversification of the dissemination tools;
- Sensitivity to the national contexts and seizing opportunities;
- Social media as a powerful dissemination tool, especially when young people are the main target group.

CHAPTER 8:

Encompassing a wider perspective: results and lessons from the internal evaluation

Adriana Albuquerque, Teresa Seabra, CIES

Introduction: internal evaluation framework

This chapter provides the reader with a practical understanding of the main standards and processes of the internal evaluation of the SAS project. The internal evaluation of the project SAS combined some elements of a process evaluation (occurred during the procedures and tasks involved in implementing the project) with some elements of an outcome-based evaluation (measurement of outcomes and impact over the short-term). The aim of the analysis was to evaluate selected elements of the project taking into account relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

The goal was to evaluate three major dimensions:

- *The partnership with national stakeholders.* Determine the level of involvement and satisfaction of national stakeholders with their participation in the project. This set of indicators is of extreme importance for guaranteeing the sustainability of the project at a national level;
- The experimentation in its four modalities: mentors' training, volunteers' training,

mentoring and volunteering. Analysing the experimentation in terms of initial outputs and final outcomes, with the ultimate goal of portraying the level of adequacy of the methodologies and pedagogies adopted and of the adaptations made, both at a national and international level;

- Main impact of the project and recommendations for future sustainability. Drawing a list of lessons learned and of goal of improving practices taking into account national specificities and the participants' views (mentors, volunteers and stakeholders).

The Success at School project in numbers: who participated?

The standing definition of a project participant is a mentor or young person who has participated in at least one of the modalities of the experimentation – being those training, mentoring, volunteering and final evaluation.

- 195 young people were involved in the project (Fig. 1)
- 145 mentors were involved in the project (Fig. 2)

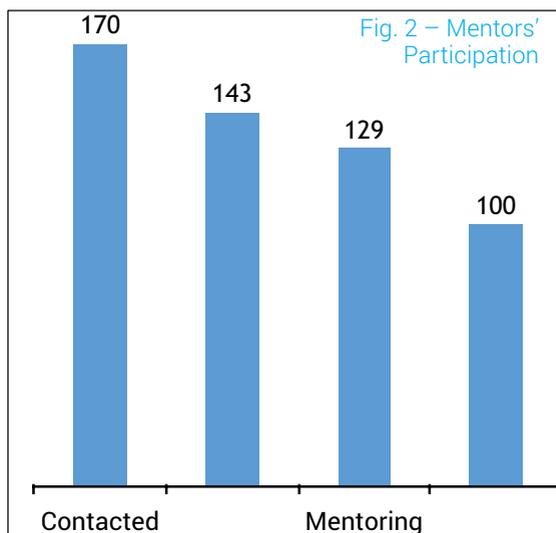
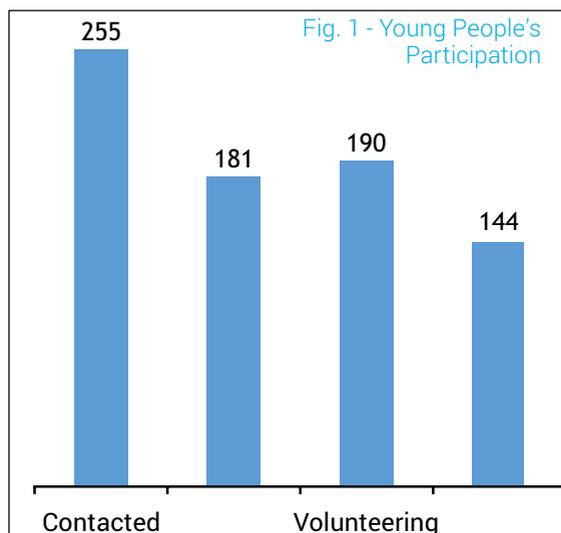


Fig. 1 – Young People' Participation

Fig. 2 – Mentors' Participation

As can be seen in Fig.1, 255 young people across the 6 partner countries were contacted to take part in the SAS experimentation. Those who participated, did so more in the practical modality of the experimentation – volunteering (195) – than in training (181).

This can be explained by the fact that the flexible nature of the training guidelines allowed the partners to develop different methods and strategies to adapt it to the characteristics and interests of the young people. In some cases, this meant not doing the training as a separate moment in the SAS experience but integrating it within the mentoring sessions, which proved successful in engaging the young people in volunteering.

As for the mentors (Fig. 2), the engagement was slightly bigger in training (145) than in the mentoring activities (129). This was mainly due either to a lack of time to participate fully in the experimentation or because, in some countries, the overall number of mentors taking part in the training outstripped the number of young people participating. It should be noted that the mentors' training was much appreciated by the participants, who stressed the relevance of the training as a professional and personal benefit in itself.

For both young people and mentors, the low participation in the final evaluation has to do with time limitations regarding the stakeholders' availability at the end of the project due to clashes with the beginning or end of the school year.

Young people

The young people were the main beneficiaries of the project and included the range of ESL or NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) ages, as defined by the European Union and specific to the project. The young people's profiles, therefore, consisted of early school leavers (ESL) and students in situation of potential dropout between the ages of 15-24. These criteria were met, since 91% of young people involved in the SAS project were between 14 and 17 years old, and 9% were between 18 and 24 years old (Fig. 3).

About half of the young people involved were ESL (49%), and a slightly higher percentage of them were potential ESL (51%). The prevalence of the latter was mainly due to difficulties in tracking down school dropouts, particularly those already past compulsory school age.

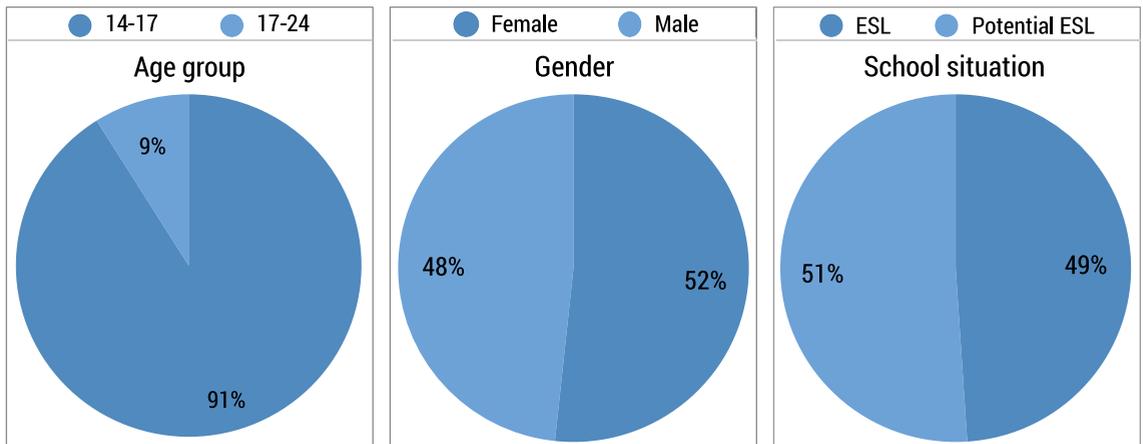


Fig. 3- Young People's Profile

Qualitative measures of the young people's relationship with their school experience showed that all students felt disengaged from education. Some of the most common reasons identified by the young people were:

- Not feeling able to learn properly;
- Feeling that school had little practical usefulness;
- Acknowledging that their lack of interest materialized in a lack of effort to learn.

This negative relationship with school impacted on other dimensions of their attitude, namely, the way they related with learning, as well as their self-esteem and self-confidence. Upon closer examination, and from the data gathered by the mentors who worked closely with the young people, we could identify four major challenges most young people, who participated in the SAS project, had to face:

- Lack of ability to adapt to different social contexts;
- Difficulty in communicating their feelings and/or complex and integrated sets of ideas;
- Reluctance in taking charge of activities or providing feedback and ideas;
- Difficulty in developing activities/projects/ideas in an autonomous way.

Mentors

The mentors consisted of people with previous experience with mentoring and/or working with young people that had school difficulties and ESL. Approximately 90% of all mentors had experience of working with young people, being most of them educators and members of local associations. Age-wise we found a very diverse range of people. As for gender, about 85% were female and the rest were male. Some of the mentors were also students at the University of Northampton, University of Bologna and New Bulgarian University. Not all of them were studying to become educators and, specifically at the University of Northampton, volunteering as a mentor was also an opportunity to learn valuable employability skills.

Experimenting an alternative pedagogical strategy: developments and results

The originality of the Success at School project was combining volunteering activities with the ongoing support of mentors. This section will focus on the evaluation of both aspects.

Volunteer training

The “detour” strategy approach was the pedagogical approach chosen by the consortium partners and developed by IRIV, the WP2 leader. It consisted of a set of goals and methodologies based on the idea that “young people can be supported to re-engage with learning by affording them the opportunity to participate in other activities, beyond school, that would allow them to learn in other ways” (SAS Public Progress Report, 2013). During the implementation of the volunteer training, the consortium partners decided to adapt the scope and the approach techniques to the specific audiences of young people and the educational context in each country. Three adaptations were crosscutting (see chapter on experimentation):

- The planned 6 modules were compressed into 2-3 sessions;
- The contents of all the modules were re-worked to enhance continuity and avoid segmentation between the themes approached;
- Active pedagogical strategies were added to what was initially a fundamentally expositive approach to the training – several fieldtrips to local volunteering institutions and associations were made, as well as roleplaying and workshops on several subjects (e.g.: how to build an association, how to design a social intervention project, etc.).

These adaptations were in line with what was the project's approach towards national stakeholders and mentors: a bottom-up constructivist and collaborative approach was the methodological basis for negotiating with the mentors, the national stakeholders, and the young people what was the best approach towards the young people involved, considering their profile and the stakeholders' time and resources available.

Volunteering activities

The volunteering activities were a significant part of the project, since its pedagogical philosophy relied on the idea that it is through the involvement in a selfless initiative that the young people would acquire and discover competencies and capacities not often formally recognized within the school system. There were no general guidelines structuring the implementation of the volunteering activities in every country, due to several national specificities regarding legislative limitations and young people's target groups' characteristics. Above all, they varied as the result of the project partners' agreement to position young people's voice at the heart of the experimentation.

The volunteering experiences differed in the level of involvement of the participants (young people and mentors) and in the types of activities performed. Starting with the level of involvement, Fig. 4 shows that the majority of partners presented the young people with the possibility of choosing their volunteering activity (57%), but only 43% of the partners had young people actually choosing them. Mentors were ultimately the participants who showed more active participation in this aspect (57%), which is understandable considering that most young people had very low self-confidence and had a hard time making decisions by themselves, needing the help of mentors for at least narrowing down the volunteering possibilities.



Fig. 4 – Level Of Involvement Of Participants In The Choice Of Volunteering Activities

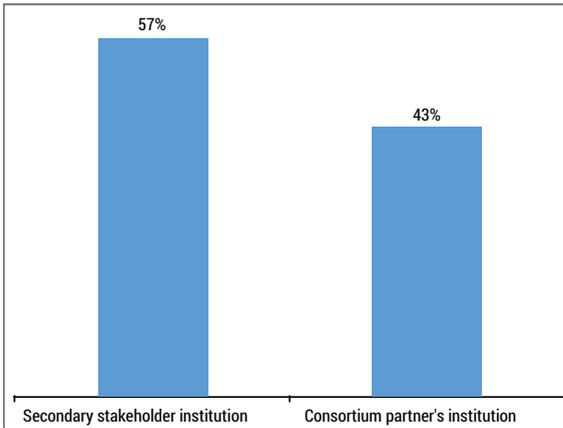


Fig. 5 – Institutional Contexts Where The Volunteering Happened

Fig. 5 helps to understand why 43% of consortium partners had stakeholders chose the type of volunteering done by the young people: the majority of the activities were performed in the context of associations that were stakeholders to the SAS project (57%), who had their field of intervention defined prior to SAS, therefore limiting the volunteering possibilities.

The volunteering activities can be grouped into five categories (Fig. 6). The most common volunteering activities offered by the partners were related to cultural and anti-racist intervention (57%),

ranging from organizing cultural events promoting ethnic diversity and fighting prejudice to collecting life-stories of immigrants with similar backgrounds as the young people and their relatives. 43% of the partners offered volunteering activities related to social solidarity and helping the most vulnerable groups of society, organizing and assisting the organization of cultural and sports events, and/or childcare and sociocultural animation. Other volunteering activities were provided by 29% of the partners (e.g.: developing land for community use; providing user support at a local job seeking office).

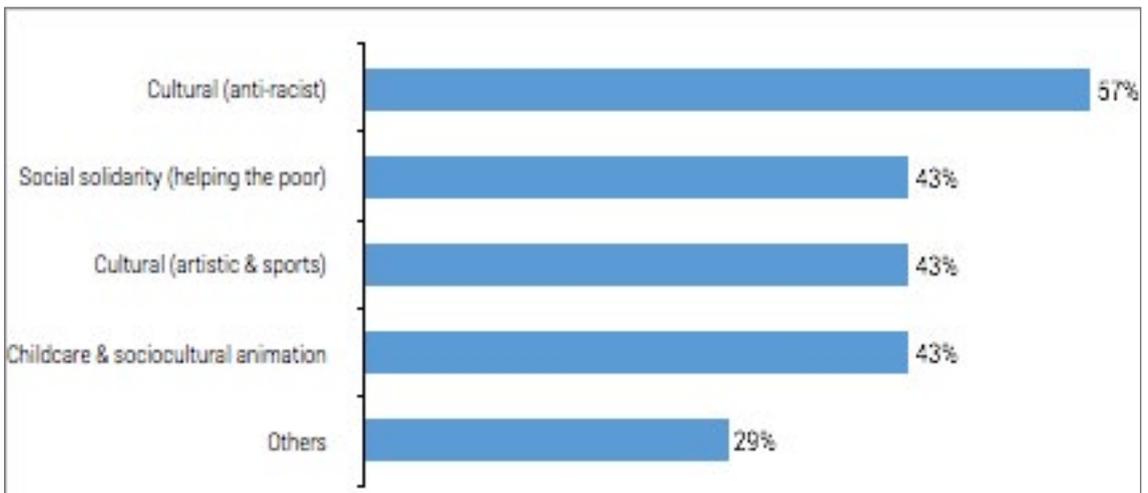


Fig. 6 – Types Of Volunteering Activites Realized By Young People (In % Of Partners)

Mentors' training

A further aspect of the 'detour' strategy consisted in providing training to both mentors about working with young, and at times, vulnerable people, and training for young people about the nature and merits of volunteering. The mentors' training consisted of a combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies covering the following:

- To present the SAS project, its structure, aims and goals;
- To provide an understanding of the main characteristics, aims, objectives and methodologies associated with mentoring, by presenting a relevant, practical and contextual literature review on the subject;
- To contribute to the deeper understanding of the phenomena of ESL and school disengagement;
- To contribute to the understanding of the benefits of volunteering and mentoring for school learning.

The adaptations made during the implementation of the mentors' training guidelines to the national contexts followed two trends among the consortium partners:

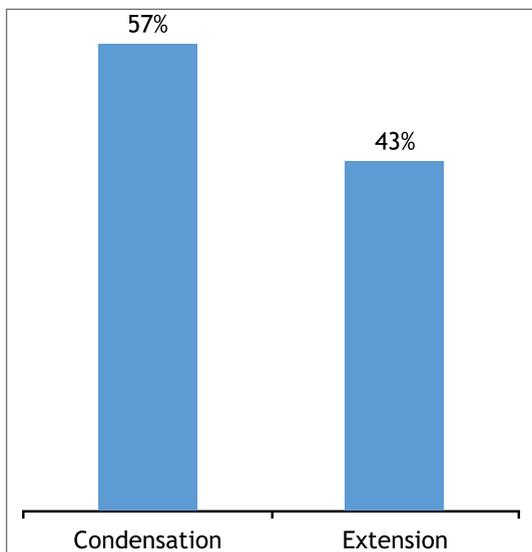


Fig. 7 – Adaptation Strategies Applied To Mentors' Training

- The condensation of time and contents of the training into less sessions (3-6 sessions instead of the predicted 14) over the course of one or three days;
- The extension of the mentor training over the course of the volunteering experience and of the mentoring activities.

Both these strategies were constrained by the resources (time, human and financial) available to the consortium partners. Fig. 7 shows that the majority of partners chose to condensate the training (57%), focusing more on the pedagogical and practical contents of the training and adapting it to the national context while keeping the four fundamental responsibilities mentioned above. Others

chose to extend the training in time (43%), usually giving the core of the training in the first sessions as preparation for the mentoring activities with the young people and continuing with ongoing problem-oriented meetings for mentors facing hardships in the field.

Mentoring activities

As for the volunteering activities, their implementation in each national context followed the “detour” pedagogical approach mentioned earlier. There were no specific guidelines for structuring the mentoring, since country and regional specificities in the field of school dropout and failure were soon recognized: the design of the mentoring activities needed only to bear in mind the pedagogical strategy, the expected outcomes and the project’s aims for the experimentation as a whole.

Fig. 8 shows that the activities realized during mentoring can be categorized into four types, with varying frequency among partners. Reflecting on school issues and the future was the major activity realized in mentoring with the young people, having been done by all partners (100%); preparing the volunteering activities, which was the explicit role of the mentors (86%) came second; reflecting on self-identity issues important for their perceived school performance, ranging from self-confidence to ethnic affiliation (71%) was the fourth activity; and, finally, some partners chose to add fieldtrips to local volunteering institutions as preparation for the volunteering activities (57%).

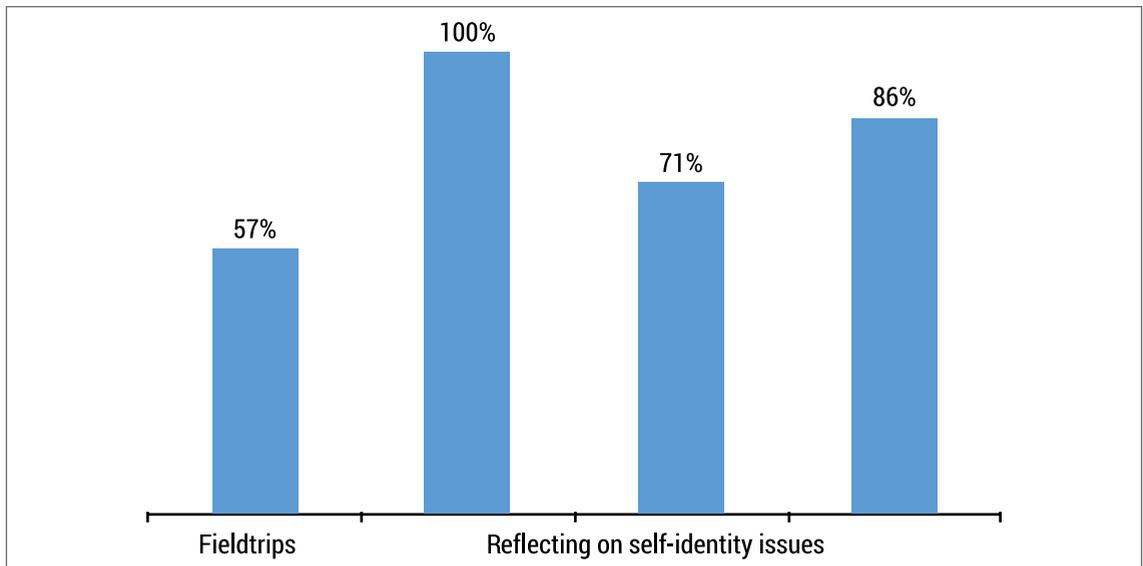


Fig. 8 – Type Of Activities Realized During Mentoring (In % Of Partners)

What were the main results of the experimentation?

The activities achieved the four goals of the project to varying extent:

- That volunteering combined with mentoring helps to tackle educational underachievement.

As far as the first goal goes, the project lacked the time scope necessary to properly assess if the developed activities had any long-lasting effect on the school success of the young people who participated. Despite this, nine young people were rewarded by their school for the volunteering activities they developed in the school, having been attributed official school credit that allowed them to pass their grade. This proved to be a positive experience since most of them were thinking about leaving school and now they have showed renewed enthusiasm in continuing school, as reported by the mentors who accompanied them.

- That the participants and stakeholders would change their perception on volunteering as a viable and effective tool for tackling ESL and general school failure, as well as a way of building new social networks at a national and local level.

The impact of the experience according to the participants' perceptions was considerable: most young people had never been volunteers before, and most mentors were educators who used mostly conventional pedagogical approaches to tackle school failure and ESL. After the experience, many young people encouraged their mentors, associations and school teachers to support them in other volunteering and associative endeavors, or even to continue the SAS initiative in their schools as an opportunity to all interested students: this is particularly relevant if we take into account that these young people were extremely introverted in what came to expressing wants related to projects and long-term goals.

Mentors have reiterated the importance of the training as their first step into alternative pedagogical methods, and of the mentoring experience as a landmark in their professional and personal pathway in terms of overcoming prejudices about young people with a difficult relationship with school and learnings.

Finally, many stakeholders have argued that they had never considered recruiting young people as volunteers – as opposed to targets for social intervention – could have positive effects like expanding their association's scope and methods of work, as well as contributing to the young people's better relationship with school.

- That the young people would change the ways in which they related to school and

school learnings through a volunteering experience, supported on the principles of autonomy and responsibility, as well as developing a relationship of mutual trust and respect with their mentor(s);

The SAS project proved particularly effective in reengaging young people who were still enrolled in school, but were highly disappointed with school and their learning pathway, through activities that connected with their interests and sometimes with their own life experiences (e.g., young people with migrant backgrounds who developed cultural activities regarding race, ethnicity and fighting prejudice), as well as through a relationship with their mentors based in exchange of ideas and motivational guidance.

- That the young people would acquire tools and skills necessary for, but not usually rewarded by, the school and other contexts of socialization throughout life.

The young people have acquired several kinds of key competencies through the activities developed during mentoring and volunteering. By working closely with local associations, they learned what associative work consists of and acquired important negotiation and collective work skills, as well as how to communicate in different social settings; through event planning, they acquired important organization skills that can be transferred towards school tasks. During the mentoring sessions, the young people were able to talk openly and think reflexively about their insecurities regarding the future (mainly school and work), and managed to weigh their options with the help of their mentors – some even decided what kind of educational path they wanted to follow thanks to the volunteering activities developed.

Building local, national and interpersonal bonds: how relevant was the SAS project to the participants?

An evaluation of the project's success would not be complete if it did not take into account whether the methods used and actions carried out addressed the participants' and stakeholders' interests and needs. To ascertain that, the evaluation collected evidence on two interrelated qualitative indicators:

- Motivations for participating in the project;
- Satisfaction with the participation in the project.

Below the views of stakeholders are reported according to the two indicators above.

Young people

All the young people participating in the SAS project were satisfied, meaning they all felt that the volunteering and the process of mentoring were helpful and interesting to some extent. The levels of satisfaction were higher in the cases where they had the chance to choose their volunteering activities, had a major role in defining the process and developed a meaningful relationship with the mentor and the stakeholder institution that took them in.

The most commonly raised motivations for participating in the project cited by young people were related to the volunteering activities:

- Helping people in need;
- Learning new things;
- Feeling useful and seeing the results of their effort materialized in a good cause;
- Meeting new people and having fun with a different activity.

By the end of the experimentation, all the young people were asked about their satisfaction with the work they had done thanks to the SAS project. The satisfaction manifests itself mainly at three levels:

- *Emotional*: many young people made reference to the way they perceived themselves after the experimentation, using expressions such as “feeling proud of myself” for the work they achieved thanks to volunteering. The mentoring also had a major impact in the young people’s satisfaction, since they were able to develop meaningful and mutually helpful relationships with adults, which many trusted to confide their insecurities;
- *Relational*: another common reason for satisfaction was the social recognition – either as students or as belonging to a marginalized group – of figures of authority such as teachers and members of their neighbourhood; they felt that the volunteering helped them be perceived differently by the people around them, in a more positive light;
- *Instrumental*: many were satisfied with the nature of the work they developed.

Mentors

Since the majority of mentors participating in the project were professionals in education and/or training, it makes sense that all of them mentioned their desire to help young people reconnect with school and their curiosity in experimenting alternative pedagogical practices as key motivators for participating.

The major reasons for their satisfaction with the participation in the project were:

- The pertinence of the practical aspects of the mentor training for developing sensitivity towards the learning context of volunteering, as well as for acquiring non-authoritative communication abilities with young people;
- Having realized how relevant their role as meaningful adults for young people can be to promote their development as students and citizens.

National stakeholders

Most stakeholders were motivated to participate in the SAS project by a will to broaden the scope of their intervention or to experiment the results brought about by employing alternative pedagogical methodologies, depending on whether they were associations or schools.

The most referred factors contributing to their satisfaction were in line with their expectations:

- The associations were able to rethink their potential role as co-educators alongside schools, families and other community associations, as well as being contributors to the combat against ESL;
- The schools were introduced to new methods for combating ESL which gather much more enthusiasm from young people, since it allows them to engage in activities according to their interest and choice.

What can be done in the future to further increase participants' satisfaction?

According to the young people:

- Promoting autonomy is a requirement for the young people to feel like their participation was relevant: choosing their volunteering activity was a key factor for satisfaction with the experience;

- Mentoring is a fundamental aspect for the satisfaction of young people: it was mainly through mentoring that the young people were prepared to execute the volunteering activities and everything they entailed, from contacting with new realities to being in a completely different environment from what they were used to.

According to the mentors:

- Extend the time for the mentors' training: many mentors felt like the training was useful, but it should have been longer;
- Regular meetings with project coordinators: it proved beneficial to address doubts related to the development of the experimentation in real time, as well as for technical support.

According to the stakeholders:

- More time for the experimentation: a transversal critique was the short amount of time for preparing and executing the experimentation;
- Regular meetings with other stakeholders to increase motivation and share experiences.

Most relevant changes brought about by the SAS project

What positive changes can we highlight?

There are a number of changes resulting from taking part in the SAS project. They are:

- The conversion of volunteering activities into "informal school credits" – i.e., taking into consideration the volunteering process developed by the young people and the learning that stems from it while attributing grades to the students – allowed the young people to feel like their effort was officially recognized, and not just informally so, therefore successfully accomplishing one of the project's goals: to make the link between non-formal (volunteering) and formal education (school). Besides, it instilled in them a sense of achievement that might turn into a long-term impact of the SAS project;
- The type of voluntary involvement that proved most effective in engaging young people was related to activities with a cultural and identity value to the participants.

Voluntary experiences with a unidimensional focus on labour market skills proved to be less motivating for the majority of young people, as opposed to those which combined useful skills for professional contexts (e.g.: learning how to create an association, how to communicate in formal contexts, etc.) with cultural activities that involved not only instrumental thinking, but above all a creative and reflexive effort about themselves as people, citizens and members of a certain social group. In these cases, many young people expressed their will to form an association and to continue being engaged in voluntary experiences;

- The creation of national networks of stakeholders: the SAS project managed to bring together important and solid synergies around the subject of tackling ESL and school failure. Provided the right opportunity, these might be mobilized for future projects and interventions;
- The ability of mentors and stakeholders to overcome their own prejudices against young people – and particularly young people in ESL or with hardships at school – allowed them to place young people’s capability to achieve results and goals in the learning opportunities provided by their environment, and not as a purely individual responsibility;
- The acknowledgement by mentors and stakeholders of the importance of non-formal education and alternative pedagogical methods for young people’s school engagement and success;
- The acknowledgement by mentors and stakeholders of the importance of developing meaningful and mutually understanding relationships with young people for their human and academic development.

How is the future of the project and its results guaranteed?

The evaluation results indicate significant possibilities concerning the likelihood of sustaining positive outcomes after the end of the project:

- The positive evaluations made by young participants, mentors and involved institutions indicate resulting favourable changes that can persist. Young participants and mentors gained skills and knowledge that enable them build ad support more successful educational trajectories. The learning’s from the participation are persistent assets. The accomplishments at the project sites during the life of the project have been significant. The positive changes evidenced specially among young people and mentors will not easily be reversed;

- The dissemination of a free e-book which explains the overall project as well as the national specific implementation increases the possibility of replication of the approach and activities at the European level. In addition, it reinforces the debate about early school leaving (ESL) and successful strategies to tackle it;
- Stakeholders have shown high level of satisfaction on the project and a good interest to further opportunities to adopt and incorporate the SAS approach beyond the project duration. It was particularly rewarding to see how most school staff, board and teachers embraced the project's spirit, thereby negating the common-sensical view of schools as bureaucratic and closed organizations. The interest shown by this approach has to be considered a positive factor for sustainability, and it could also represent a strong point for rising new opportunities after the project completion;
- The strong network of national stakeholders built through the implementation of the project can become the bases for new initiatives to tackle school dropout, early school leaving and school failure.

PART II: THE SUCCESS
AT SCHOOL PROJECT
THE PRACTICE

CHAPTER 9:

National Case Study: England

Julian Brown, University of Northampton

1. Introduction: Early school leaving in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (UK), which includes England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, rate of early school leaving has been consistently higher than the European Union's (EU) benchmark of 10%. Within England, where the SAS project was carried out, data is gathered quarterly about those young people aged 16-24 and 18-24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Somehow, therefore, the terminology of NEET and ESL is used somewhat interchangeably and this chapter reflects this. This chapter will explore the experimentation, which occurred within the East Midlands (EM) region of England (Fig. 8.1).



Fig. 8.1 Map of Eastern Midlands
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Midlands)

Statistics for those identified as being NEET or jobs without training (JWT) in England and the EM have been consistently above the benchmark limit of 10%, as shown below.

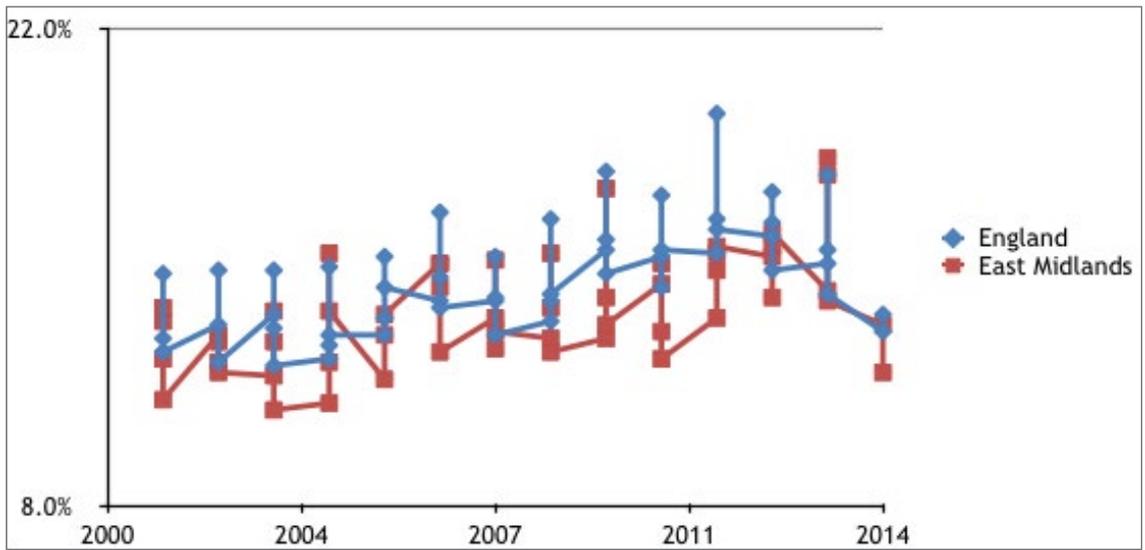


Fig. 8.2 England and East Midlands comparison – NEET (16 to 24 year olds) (DfE, 2014)

Regionally, there was an increase from 2010 to 2013, during a time of regional financial pressures and a consequent dissolution of local services, followed by a drop from 2013 to the first two quarters of 2014 reaching lower levels not seen since 2005. Also important to note is that data from the third quarter (July to September) of every year from 2001 except one, has recorded the highest percentage of young people not in education, employment or training. Therefore there is an implication for supporting young people at times of transition from secondary school to further education (FE) and from FE to higher education (HE) or from school into employment.

Although those identified as NEET are not a homogenous group (Spielhofer et al., 2009), there are common characteristics that may help to explain their situation. These include:

- Having negative experiences at school including bullying, social isolation, exclusion or stress;
- Having learning difficulties and most likely achieved few, if any, qualifications;
- Being financially disadvantaged without family financial support, or homeless themselves;
- Having a child in their teenage years.

Those who are labelled as JWT differ somewhat in that they may have family networks

that have helped them gain employment. Also, their perceptions about the information and support they received about future training and support is generally more positive than those who are NEET (Spielhofer et al., 2009). There are also gender differences as can be seen in Figure 8.3. There is a paucity of data regarding why the percentage is higher for the female population and therefore could be an area of further investigation for researchers and policy makers to help explain this phenomenon.

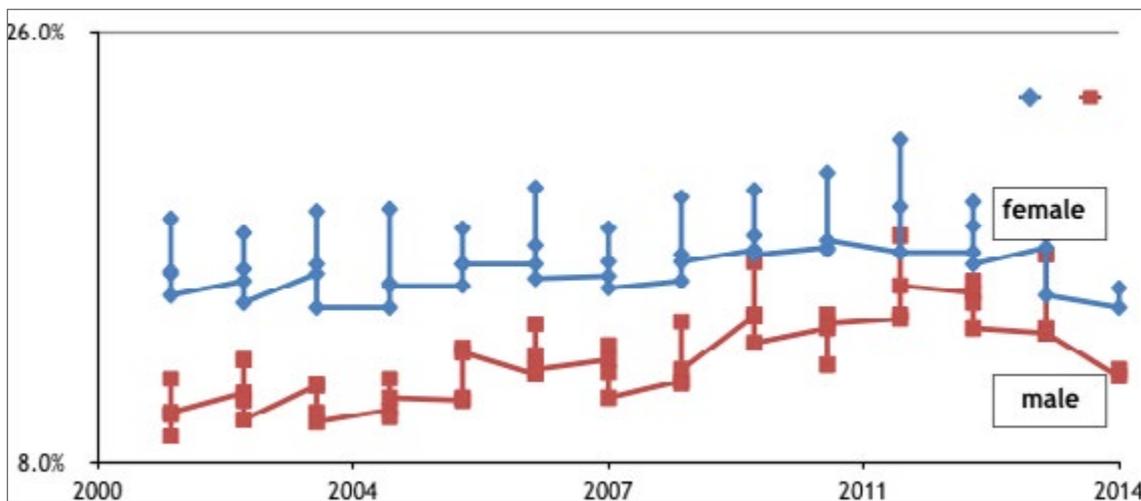


Fig. 8.3 Male and female comparison for England – NEET (16 to 24 year olds) (DfE, 2014)

There are a diverse number of explanations why some young people are classified as ESL or NEET. First, it should be recognised that young people may be going through financial difficulties or lack a supportive network of family or friends. The abolition of the means-tested Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in 2010, which used to provide financial support to young people (16-19 years of age) in pursuit of post-compulsory education or training, could be a factor. This increased participation in post-compulsory education (Middleton, et al., 2009) and made a substantial difference to those who were homeless or a teenage parent (Allen, et al., 2003). In England EMA has been replaced by the 16-19 Bursary Fund and Learning Support Funds, also known as Discretionary Learner Support, available for those aged 19 or over.

Another reason for the presence of ESL is a lack of communication about further study or employment opportunities. As with the EMA, budget cuts occurred since 2010 have resulted in the closure of one of the key services for young people aged 13-19, Connexions was dissolved in many regions therefore reducing a central information point for young people. Its role was to advise and support young people, especially those who had some form of disadvantage, with training and careers advice. In some local areas, Connexions

services have been redesigned as not-for-profit organisations operating under different names and outside of government and local authority control. Moreover, it should also be noted that ESL can be a result of social isolation or specific individual needs, such as a disability, family breakdown or substance abuse.

Finally, statistics on ESL should be considered alongside the leaving age for those young people in education within England and changes, which have come into force since the project began in November 2012. From the academic year beginning in 2013 the participation age increased from 16 to 17 years of age. For those born after 1 September 1997 young people will need to be in some form of education or training until the age of 18 (DfE, 2014). This can take a variety of forms including:

- Full-time education
- An apprenticeship
- Part-time education or training (including full-time volunteering) of 20 hours or more a week

As a result a number of government agencies and organisations have begun to examine some of the implications for the educational and social sectors in supporting young people up to the age of 18 and beyond (DfE, 2010; DCSF, 2009; Wolf, 2011; Nelson and O'Donnell, 2012; C4EO, 2011).

Nelson and O'Donnell (2012) recognise the need for any strategies to be focused nationally, locally and at practice-level, which includes areas that individual schools can focus upon. Table 8.1, below, has been adapted from Nelson and O'Donnell to indicate some of the approaches required at various levels of intervention.

Strategic level	Approaches
National policy-level strategies	Macro-economic funding Fiscal stimuli Central responsibility
Local policy-level strategies	Early identification of need for individuals and families Development of informal learning and volunteering activities Alternative and flexible learning opportunities Access to financial support

Strategic level	Approaches
Practice-level preventative approaches	Ongoing early intervention for individuals and families Varied and flexible curriculum Information, advice and guidance that is impartial, responsive, realistic and accessible High-quality, sustained, one-to-one support Parental involvement and support

Table 8.1 Approaches for assisting young people at risk of becoming NEET

2. Context of the SAS project in England: primary and secondary stakeholders, mentors and mentees

The implementation of the research design (see Chapter 1) was done across 4 phases (see Fig. 8.4) broadly divided to achieve the following: involvement of stakeholders and access to school settings; recruitment of young people; training of young people and mentors; volunteering in action; and, final evaluation.



Fig. 8.4 SAS in action – University of Northampton

As one of the key aims of the project was to involve community stakeholders at all levels of the project development, schools, colleges, government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at both the local, regional and national level were invited to stakeholder meetings at the start of project. The aim of the meeting was to outline the project so as to gain their views on the target audience for the project, and how organisations and schools could be involved. Unfortunately, community stakeholders did not engage as expected.

There were a number of external factors that impacted on the coordination of the project and the ability to communicate and involve to the target audience. When the project began, during the autumn of 2012, both nationally and regionally, there were changes to the educational and social landscape. Firstly, and a consequence of the passing of the Academy Bill, a growing number of schools became academies, that is schools outside the Local Authority (LA) control and controlled by a centralised sponsor. In the name of decentralisation, more freedom and covert privatisation of state education, 'alternative education providers' took a more prominent role in providing an alternative curriculum to those young people who were excluded or at risk of exclusion from the school. Additionally, there were changes to the LA responsibility for some of the organisations, e.g. Connexions, which potentially the project could work with. Furthermore, changes also occurred with regard to the charity sector, thus contributing to a fragmented network which impeded communication.

The organisations and school settings which contributed to the experimentation of the project reflected the changing and challenging situation for young people who were or at risk of becoming ESL or NEET and had a diverse set of circumstances without any central coordination. Suffice to say that when reflecting back on Nelson and O'Donnell's proposed model stated earlier, there were few elements at the national or local level that supported the project and that support and structure for ESL or NEET was dependent upon 'practice-level approaches'. Therefore, the organisations and schools who contributed to the experimentation was representative of the framework for education and social justice which is growingly evident throughout the country, but with regional variations. Notwithstanding the challenges, the team of researchers in England managed to ensure the collaboration of 4 schools, two local charities and the support of the University Centre for Employment and Engagement (UCEE).

3. Preparing the Ground

The experimentation phase of the project required multiple and coordinated actions which included finding volunteering activities and associations willing to welcome the young people; working with schools to recruit the young people; and recruiting and training the mentors. To ensure all part of the plan could work together, the two researchers in the team shared the responsibility of working with schools and young people, on the one hand, and recruiting and training the mentors, on the other.

3.1 Volunteering

The first challenge was to find organisations in the town, which were willing to give the young people the opportunity to volunteer. To this effect, the regional centre for local volunteering

was consulted on numerous occasions to gain support for the project from NGOs operating in the city and region. However, although there were a wide variety of volunteering options, the vast majority were directed towards those eighteen years and older, and only few provided opportunities for those under the age of sixteen. Trying to find ways to involve young people through formal volunteering channels highlighted further gaps and limitations.

For example, there were no established joint programmes with schools although this was seen as an area to develop and the alternative education provider that worked with the project had already begun to provide opportunities for the young people with a specific project being run by the volunteering centre. It was noted that voluntary associations could have individuals interested in providing mentoring but there was no systematic approach in place to support this and that the development of further opportunities depended upon the capacity of organisations themselves. There were also limitations for those under eighteen who did not have the social or family network to provide transportation and other types of support needed in order to volunteer. Although there were a number of events organised by the 'National Citizenship Service' and other organisations, e.g. 'Enable', there was no central coordination of these and the majority were dependent on sporadic funding.

Unable to find ways in which the volunteering community could be involved, the project team took the pragmatic approach of discussing the types of volunteering activities the young people and the schools were the most interested in doing and using their ideas as a stimulus to create their own opportunities.

3.2 School settings and young people

The four secondary school settings, which became involved with the project, were self-selected following initial stakeholder meetings. Each setting had highlighted ESL as a development point within their school/organisation and were looking for ways to develop the young people's skills and enthusiasm. It was noted by some that this was partly due to a dissolution of local support systems that used to address such needs.

Table 8.2 below lists the educational settings involved in the experimentation of the project and some of the data gathered to provide an explanation about their particular context. It should be noted that the settings are not comparable to one another as they have very different structures, student population and different methods of accountability. The following categories of additional need are represented in the data as these are often used in English settings to explain the diversity of a population and are also significant when exploring factors for ESL and NEET:

- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Free School Meals (FSM)

School setting	Characteristics	Inspectorate data
Secondary school A Academy Enterprise Trust (ages 11-19) Number on role: approximately 1300	10.7% SEN 13.6% EAL 17.8% FSM 27.3% FSM over the past 6 years 5.7% - Overall absence 8.3% - persistent absence	'Outstanding' Grade 1 in all categories (November 2013)
Secondary school B Academy federation (ages 3-19) Number on role: approximately 1400	5.9% SEN 6.1% EAL 22.2% FSM 31.1% FSM over the past 6 years 6.8% - Overall absence 9.1% - persistent absence	'Requires improvement' Grades 2 and 3 in all categories (July 2013)
General Further Education College (ages mostly 16-19) Based across three sites Number on role: approximately 7000	'Almost all groups of students achieve equally well except for a widening gap in achievement between students of a White and Black Caribbean heritage and their peers.' 'Students with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities achieve at a higher rate than their peers.' 'Attendance is increasing but requires improvement.' (Source OfSTED report 2013)	'Good' Grade 2 in all categories (February 2013)
Alternative Education Academy (ages 14-24) Based across three sites Number on role: Data not available. The centre runs six-week interventions and therefore does not have a consistent student population.	No data is available The centre advertises alternative opportunities for students who are 'NEET' and accepts students who have become 'disaffected' from local schools and colleges.	No data is available. It is unclear how the Quality Assurance process will apply to centres such as this.

Table 8.2 Participating Settings

Settings receive additional funding for young people in receipt of FSM in the form of the 'Pupil Premium' and additional funds for SEN, however, this is dependent upon the degree of SEN. Inspectorate data is gathered from the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED).

The young people who participated in the project came from a range of backgrounds and had a diverse set of needs. Table 8.3 outlines information about the young people.

Ages	11 – fourteen years 10 – fifteen years 10 – sixteen years (four withdrew from the project as they turned sixteen and left school). One who did turn sixteen continued with the project and came to the evaluation. 1 – nineteen years (withdrew from the project)
School year of education at the time of the project	Years 10 to 13.
Gender	18 male 13 female
Additional information	All students were identified as a result of low attendance and general behavioural concerns. In a one instance this was recognised as the specific condition of Asperger's and in several others there were acknowledged, but not specific, learning difficulties.

Table 8.3 Data about the young people

Each school had an individual member of staff responsible for the young people who were 'at risk' of ESL/NEET although the status of these individuals varied. In some cases it was a head of learning support or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), whilst in others it was teachers given additional responsibility for this group of young people. In three out of 4 cases, the lead person was not a member of senior leadership and this had implications for how timely the project could be run since decisions had to be delayed until approved by the head teacher and his or her team. Negotiations took place between the researchers and the lead person so as to reach a common understanding on the best approach for that specific setting and group of young people. As a result the primary stakeholders commented that the project would need to consider:

- Headteacher and/or school governing body approval was required prior to commencing the experimentation phase;

- The timing of the volunteering activity would need to consider staffing availability and curriculum restrictions, especially in relation to young people who were taking exams;
- The size of the group involved in the volunteering activity would need to be limited;
- There was a need for additional networking with national organisations that had experience in the area eg. The Prince's Trust
- The volunteering activity would have to be flexible enough to suit the interests of the young people

Organisations and schools were consulted through the stakeholder meetings when considering who would mentor the young people. One organisation, which was going to be involved to provide mentors, had to withdraw due to a lack of capacity within the organisation to facilitate the process. Also, schools were unable to provide mentors as there were timetabling and curriculum constraints that impeded their involvement. As a result, the mentors were sought in collaboration with a centre based at a higher education institution, whose focus is on supporting students to gain voluntary and employed opportunities. It was this 'University Centre for Employability and Engagement' (UCEE) that provided support for the researchers in advertising, training and supporting the mentors.

3.3 The mentors

A decision was made early on of inviting our own students studying courses in the School of Education and in other schools to become mentors. Besides being an opportunity for them to work directly with young people, the inclusion of our students was also in line with the University of Northampton's social responsibility and student experience strategies. In consultation with two staff members from the University Centre for Employability and Engagement (UCEE), who were also part of our stakeholders, an application process was proposed to recruit the mentors. This decision was made because UCEE has experience of providing students at the researchers' university with career advice and programmes to enhance their employability skills and competences. A number of open sessions were held to outline the project to potential mentors as well as to provide them with advice for how to apply and adapt their curriculum vitae (CV) to be submitted to UCEE as part of employability training. In practice, due to the short timeline of the project, this approach was not effective and therefore mentors were accepted without having submitted a CV or letter of application. Mentors were also required to have 'clearance' from the Criminal Records Bureau, a requirement of anyone working with children or young people in England.

This proved an obstacle for some as the process caused a delay with their involvement. Employees of the settings were also invited to become mentors as some had expressed an interest early on in the project, although in the end no one took up the opportunity.

Table 8.4 identifies some of the specific information about the mentors.

Gender	3 male 12 female
Age range	Mid-twenties to mid-fifties
Student status	Two first year undergraduate Five second year undergraduate Five third year undergraduate Three PhD (doctoral) students
Degree	Education – Youth Studies Education – Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Psychology Business Studies

Table 8.4 Mentor demographic information

A number of mentors commented that they were motivated because of their own positive experiences of being mentored themselves. They therefore wanted to offer the same positive experiences to young people and to offer them opportunities to develop as individuals and to help them develop an appreciation of education and training. The following comments from the mentors illustrate these points:

'I was mentored at secondary school and wouldn't be at uni if it hadn't been for them. Therefore I wanted to give something back.'

'I wasn't very good at school and therefore had a mentor who helped me. I wanted to give something back. My mentors taught me a lot about myself.'

'I want to inspire them and give them hope. I want to see that change'

'Having my own children I know the benefit of how it can change them.'

Amongst the mentors, two were PhD students whose research focused on role of the learning mentor in schools, and the role of mentors in further education, specifically those mentoring new teachers. Some others wanted experience which could be used towards future employment opportunities e.g. counselling.

Once mentors had applied and were selected, two separate training sessions were held to help prepare them for mentoring the young people. These sessions were planned after the majority of undergraduate sessions had finished and before the assessment period began (Table 5).

Session	Objective of the session	Mentors' evaluation
Session 1	Brief outline of SAS project What is mentoring? Qualities of a good mentor Safeguarding and child protection Health and safety Conflict and conflict resolution Equality and diversity Supporting you as mentors	'The session was productive in creating an awareness of the concept of mentoring and good practice in mentoring as well as the extent of the problem of exclusion and disaffection prevailing in the current scenario. The group activity also meant we could consider possible situations (both positive and negative) and how to address it best. Also, the session created awareness various issues associated with safeguarding and protection of young people in our care.'
Session 2	What is research Being a researcher Why does ESL happen? Working with young people Defining goals and target setting	'Provided a clear objective of the project and the process to be followed. Besides the session also provided basic information about various aspects of research.' 'Excellent, thought provoking and informative presentation and group discussions helped to understanding and appreciation of member mentors prior knowledge/understanding of prior experiences and potential expectations from both a mentor and potentially that of the mentees perspective.'

Table 8.5 Mentor training

During the training and prior to working with the young people, the mentors expressed their views about how the young people might perceive them as mentors. Some were concerned about the age gap between the young people and themselves suggesting that they might be perceived too much as a parent and that the young people would feel as though they were telling them what to do and that it would be, '*Hard to get to the level of a 15 year old.*'

Conversely, others felt they might be too young and that the young people, *'Maybe they won't respect me because I'm not that much older than them'*.

4. Volunteering and mentoring in action

4.1 Volunteering

Because the majority of young people had no previous experience of volunteering but had a concept about what it was, and because, as already mentioned, each school was an individual institution with its own rules and goals, individual discussions with the schools were held to decide upon the most appropriate approach for the mentoring and volunteering. The fact that, in some instances, young people perceived volunteering negatively as an activity, which demanded time commitment and effort but *'you don't get paid'* added further challenges in recruiting the young people as voluntary participants in the project. Setting up volunteering activities was further hampered by the fact that voluntary associations were not forthcoming. Moreover, even those sporting organisations that were associated with the university and which could have provided activities for those young people who were interested in sport did not have volunteers under the age of eighteen or even sixteen.

Lacking the support of the voluntary sector, but still keen to provide a volunteering experience to the young people we had recruited, schools were given two options:

- Option A - To examine an issue within the community, e.g. homelessness, food poverty, environmental issues. The young people would then be encouraged and supported to take action (through visits and voluntary activities) to help address one of the issues.
- Option B - To consult with school representatives (e.g. school council, leadership team) about any areas for improvement required within the school. The young people would then select an area to improve and work together to address it.

All settings opted for option A as it would have the most relevance for the young people whilst providing stronger links between the setting and the community, an outcome desired by the leadership groups within the settings.

School A attempted to connect with an animal shelter. However, risk assessment, which is required for all school activities taking place outside the school premises, and senior management' clearance did not arrive in time. This resulted in a change to the mentoring

role which was less focused on helping young people to acquire skills related to setting up a volunteering campaign and more on mentoring them in their learning. Unfortunately, some of the young people were on temporary exclusion on many occasions and some others did not attend the mentoring sessions.

In School B the young people contacted a voluntary association that ran a food bank in the local community. The organisation was very helpful, responded to the e-mails from the young people and gave them a tour of the food bank. The young people had collected food in their school on behalf of this organisation and delivered it during their visit. One mentor commented that, *'They were motivated to think and act independently and to take initiative. They were encouraged to realise their capabilities and potential and this increased their confidence. They also felt proud to be part of an activity to help others. They succeeded in planning an event and executing it. The activity also helped test their communication and organisational skills.'* It was also noteworthy that the volunteering experience required the young people to develop their collaborative skills and demonstrate they could compromise and work as part of a team. One young person demonstrated leadership skills that hadn't been seen prior to the project.

In School C, the further education college, 3 young women came forward. At initial meetings a number of ideas about volunteering which had a social impact were put forward. In the end, the decision was taken to collect food for the local food bank. As these were older students at the end of their school career, they had more freedom in engaging with the mentors. Unfortunately, two students withdrew. Furthermore, the timing of the volunteering activity was unfortunate in as much these was exam time and once the exams were over, the third student withdrew as well.

The alternative setting D chose to develop an open area that young people could use to meet. The space, donated a local leisure facility, was landscaped by the young people. This involved the trimming of trees, clearing of weeds and landscaping the area in preparation for its use as a meeting place for young people from the local area. The young people worked alongside mentors and staff and showed a great deal of team work in the process. A mentor identified ways that this experience had developed the young people's confidence and self-esteem:

'Individuals seemed more inclined to take part in activities that they were not previously acquainted with and grew more in confidence and self-esteem through their participation of the volunteering. They were able to put constructive ideas forward which their peers acknowledged.'

Older students expressed an interest in having volunteering opportunities that would give

'added value' to their CVs and contribute towards their future study or employment. This link between volunteering and employment was seen as essential for those sixteen or older. The possibility of gaining some form of accreditation through volunteering was also seen as a means towards making this connection more explicit.

4.2 Mentoring

The mentors spent time during the first meeting to get to know the students they would be working with. This was the same across all four settings and was structured around a framework designed by the research team. It was suggested the mentors and mentees spent some time to establish agreed goals and ways of working together. Across all settings the following themes emerged as necessary requirements for effective mentor/mentee relationships:

- Treat each other with respect
- Be non-judgmental
- Actively listen and offer advice
- Be there when you say you will be
- Be patient with each other and try to understand

The young people were much more interested to discuss issues/problems with the mentors than to discuss topics from the pedagogical approach. Many of the concepts were familiar to the young people but they needed to have more experience of them before discussing them theoretically. The young people highly valued the time with the mentors and it was evident that personal time and relationship building was the most important aspect from the perspective of the young people. This concurs with the 'one to one' approach recommended by Nelson and O'Donnell (2012). However, due to limitations regarding space, personnel and time it was difficult to have individual sessions as one mentor states:

'There were minimal chances to do one to one mentoring with individuals and when it did take place it was very informal. However for this group of volunteers I think it helped them to be more at ease and trust those who mentored/worked alongside them.'

There were changes to the mentoring personnel during the programme. Two mentors left

due to personal concerns about the usefulness of the voluntary activity and one other left to volunteer themselves in another country. Mentors who sustained their input throughout the project expressed their views about how the project had impacted on them personally and professionally, illustrated in the comments which follow:

'The volunteering experience has enabled a more in-depth perspective of the barriers faced by those involved with the volunteering project. I have gained a better insight of the challenges faced by the young volunteers with regard to their education. It has helped to identify the immense need for more volunteering opportunities for young people so they may be given the chance to re-engage with learning in a less formal and linear way.'

'It enabled me to look at the whole thing from the mentees perspective and reflect on the possibilities which these young people could benefit from with positive support. Also, it taught me about a number of things that appear to be insignificant to other adults but are hugely significant to the mentees.'

'It was good because I only had the knowledge and understanding however not physically being there and talk to the youngsters was a different experience. I just realised how the society blames youngsters but where in fact they need reassurance and actually being there for them.'

5. Lessons learnt

5.1 Volunteering

The young people who completed the experimentation had a sense of satisfaction with what they had achieved. This was especially evident where they had decided on the scope of their volunteering and had guided the process every step of the way. Where the volunteering activity was chosen for them by the school it was less successful and demotivated the young people. Volunteering which could lead towards some form of accreditation and/or provide links to employment would help young people see tangible benefits for their voluntary efforts. There is also a need for voluntary organisations to be supported in the development of programmes, which would support the participation of young people below the age of eighteen.

5.2 Mentoring

Collaboration between the settings and the mentors was required during the mentor training. It would have been beneficial for the mentors to meet representatives from the settings in order to share the dynamics of their working context and outline some of the needs of the individual young people. Mentors were working with the young people in four different settings. As a result they experienced different challenges to the mentoring process. Where it worked the most effectively the mentors had a regular location and time in which to meet with the young people. The mentoring therefore became part of the mentees routine. This was enabled by flexibility within the school system to allow the students time outside of their curriculum requirements to meet with the mentors. Also having one individual as a representative of the setting was needed to have consistency of understanding amongst the staff. That individual also required a degree of flexibility in how to work with the young people. One setting was very 'unstructured' which made it difficult for mentors to identify how they 'fitted in' with the timetable. Another was too structured. This resulted in the mentors feeling as though they didn't have autonomy or freedom to structure the mentoring as they had hoped.

5.3 Implications for settings

The project was most successful when settings empowered the young people to be responsible for all aspects of the project including decision-making, implementation and communicating to potential voluntary associations. This approach requires three mechanisms to facilitate its success. First it requires one key contact in the school with responsibility and decision-making power to coordinate the programme and liaise with other staff and associations. Secondly, direct access to the head teacher or 'gate-keeper' is required to allow quick decision making. A third aspect that is important from both settings and policymakers is flexibility within the curriculum and accreditation pathways that enable volunteering to be recognised as a contributory factor towards employability and important competencies of the individual.

5.4 Implications for policymakers

Nationally and regionally there is a need for a greater degree of oversight for the programmes that would support young people who are ESLs or 'at risk' of becoming NEET. Investment is needed to support employers and voluntary associations to provide opportunities to those who are more vulnerable, do not have the family or social network to support volunteering as well as those with special needs or behavioural difficulties. This includes addressing

the 'gap' in voluntary associations for the under 18s and considering how greater flexibility and collaboration can be created between schools and voluntary associations.

Conclusion: sustainability through social enterprise

The long-term sustainability of a project such as 'Success at School', or for that matter to reduce ESL or NEET, requires a greater degree of regional coordination and fiscal investment. Voluntary organisations, by definition, require the 'good will' of society and therefore may not have the capacity to implement or evaluate programmes over the long term. This was captured by the comments of one mentor who stated, *'I think many that are still within the project would like to see it through to the end. Although there seems to be the challenge that there is no facility for this once they reach school leaving age and funding for them ceases.'*

In order to address this concern, a group of the students who volunteered as mentors, the project leader and the lead researcher are exploring the opportunity provided by the University of Northampton of setting up a social enterprise to continue providing a valuable service to the young people in Northampton. This venture has to be seen within a vibrant Higher Education context which promotes their students' experience through volunteering and the gaining of employability skills; which has a mission to 'Transform Lives and Inspire Change'; and which already has an established track record of research and practice of social innovation and social entrepreneurship with a social impact.

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CHAPTER 10:

Implementing the SAS project in France. An experience conducted in Essonne

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Introduction

First and foremost we would like to underline that in the framework of the SAS project, only one implementation was expected by country - the Assfam being responsible for it in France. In addition to this French implementation, an additional one was offered by the other French partner, iriv, in another part of Ile de France.

In this chapter, we mean to explain the implementation of the Success at School project in a département near Paris, in Essonne, in the region of the Ile de France. The implementation of the SAS project in Essonne could be conducted within the existing national programme for Early School Leavers – Success at school (Réussite éducative) in Essonne.

The “innovative approach” offered by the iriv concerned both the need for creating a brand new network of stakeholders for the purpose of the SAS project and the learning process offered to the mentors & youngsters. On the one hand, the role of the mentors had to be modified as they had to support young people to engage in voluntary activities. On the other hand, the training sessions were part of the volunteering to be experienced by the youngsters as these sessions were not carried out during their work at school but outside

school, during their free time, on a totally voluntary basis. As far as the experimentation conducted by Assfam (the other French partner) was concerned, the voluntary activities were part of the “optional activities” offered at school – a time is dedicated to these activities in the cursus of the students.

In the first part of our chapter, we outline the general context of Early School Leaving (ESL) in France by focusing on the existing networks and the main stakeholders we could involve on the SAS project. In the second part, we detail the different steps that were taken to involve both the teachers and the young people on the ground. Firstly, we tried to involve as mentors professionals working with youngsters who have already dropped out. Secondly, we could involve professionals (in the City Hall of Massy and in the College Blaise Pascal) to be mentors by using the partnership they had already built thanks to the “internship” to be offered to youngsters. Thanks to their support, we could get in contact together with the youngsters. In the third part, we give more details on the content of the mentor training offered to educators and volunteer training to young people. In the last part, we offer a view of the next step of the implementation of the SAS project in Essonne outlining a plan for a sustainable implementation on the ground.

1. Context of the experimentation – identifying the key stakeholders

The experimentation was carried out in Essonne, a department located in the region of the Ile de France (30 minutes from Paris) thanks to the support and collaboration of two key stakeholders: the City Hall of Massy and the College Blaise Pascal and within the framework of the existing “Success at school network” (Réseau réussite éducative). It is important to explain to a non-French reader the different administrative divisions of the territory. These divisions are meaningful as according to the belonging to some “special areas” (Urban Sensitive Areas-ZUS in French or Priority Educative Area-SEP in French), special public funding may be allocated. The criteria for being part of these areas are: high level of poverty, unemployment, single families. Massy belongs to the first division (ZUS), the College Blaise Pascal to the second division (ZEP).

1.1 The Success at School network in Essonne

The Success at School network (Réussite éducative en Essonne) is the official name given to professionals working to Struggle against early School Leaving since it was created in Essonne in 2006 to support the educational policy. It was established thanks to the Centre Ressources Politique de la Ville en Essonne (CRPVE) whose main mission is to build networks of people sharing a common interest in different public policies. The

main criteria are to work in specific areas called Urban Sensitive Areas (Zones Urbaines Sensibles). The aim of the CRPVE is to collect all the information meaningful in the field. The struggle against early school leaving has been a main issue on the agenda of the local public policies in Urban Sensitive Areas as it is considered as a main factor of exclusion.

1.2 The Direction for Social Cohesion at the City Hall of Massy

Massy is a town of Essonne with around 45 000 inhabitants, located at 15 kilometres South of Paris. It belongs to the existing network Success at School in Essonne. It works with all the local educators working with youngsters aged 6 to 16 years, outside school, during their free time with the agreement of their parents. The objective to create social cohesion has been especially active in Massy. This objective focuses on building links with the families, the inhabitants and all the professionals working with them (educators, teachers in colleges, associations in the different districts of the City, public services working in the neighbourhood). The City Hall of Massy, and especially its Direction of Social Cohesion, has played a major role for the success of the implementation of the SAS project. Although the Direction of Social Cohesion does not exist anymore as due to institutional change it has merged together with the Direction of Education, fortunately all the actions implemented in the past will go on, especially the outputs of the SAS project (a guide was published for this purpose).

1.3 The College Blaise Pascal

The college has 380 students, aged 11 to 16 years, on roll. They include students who do not speak French as their first language who belong to a special department (UPEAA-Pedagogical Unit for Young migrants). In 2014, a special class was opened (Specialized class for school inclusion) for disabled students. It belongs to the Priority Educative Areas (Zones Educatives Prioritaires) which, more or less, takes care of the same characteristics as for the Urban Sensitive areas (high poverty rate, high unemployment rate, many single parents...). Among this educative institution, teachers are in charge of the Success at school network.

2. Implementation of the experimentation - different steps

The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv), initiator and French partner of the Success at School project, did not know any local stakeholder in the educational field in Essonne before the experimentation although it had already established contacts with

the *Centre Ressources Politique de la Ville en Essonne* (CRPVE) since 2011. For the initiative taken by the iriv, a number of steps had to be followed to ensure the implementation of the SAS project in Essonne. These were: the role of the mentors in supporting young people to engage in voluntary activities; the training sessions offered by iriv being considered as volunteering as the youngsters would come freely during their free time in a total voluntary way. This was the crucial point to be explained to the mentors willing to join the SAS project in Essonne.

2.1 Step 1- a first meeting gathering all the stakeholders involved in the Success at school (*Réussite éducative*) network in Essonne

The first step involved building a partnership with CRPVE since the SAS project fit with the general mission of the organization. They organized a general meeting in October 2013 gathering almost 30 participants, all professionals belonging to the Success at school (*Réussite éducative*) network in Essonne. Among those 30 participants, considered as stakeholders for the SAS project, two representatives of the City Hall of Massy attended the meeting, the director of the Social cohesion and an educator of the City Hall of Massy. The director offered to implement the SAS project in her city. She has been a key actor.

2.2 Step 2- Building a local partnership in Massy

A local meeting was held in November 2013 at the City Hall of Massy to gather the local stakeholders - educators and teachers- who might be interested in implementing the Success at School approach. Educators belonging to public services or to associations attended the meeting together with the professionals belonging to a national organisation, the *Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil*, whose main goal is also to fight early school leaving among youngsters through the use of apprenticeship and to an individual support provided by their educators.

A second local meeting was held in January 2014 with educators working with youngsters who have already dropped out of school. Their main concern was about the time it would take to convince those youngsters who are most of the time reluctant to consider any official or institutional proposal. The stakeholders' main challenge was how to explain to the young people why it was beneficial for them to join this project. In particular, they felt that it would have been difficult to convince the young people to attend three sessions with other youngsters they did not know and for which there was no 'material' reward. They asked for the month of February to "spread the word".

2.3 Step 3- Building a partnership with the College Blaise Pascal

Since the City Hall of Massy had been working in close partnership with the College Blaise Pascal for the past years, personal relations could be built between the Director for Social Cohesion and the teacher in charge of the Success at School network in the College. Thanks to this personal and positive relationship, the iriv, could be in contact with the College Blaise Pascal. A general introductory meeting, organised together with the teacher was organised in March 2014. More than 20 youngsters joined. At the end of the meeting, 11 youngsters were interested to join the SAS approach and registered for the training sessions.

3. The experimentation in itself- involving the target groups- mentors & youngsters

The SAS experimentation involved two parts: a mentor training for educators, or adults involved as mentors; and a volunteer training directed at the young people.

3.1 First part - involving educators for the mentoring

The first mentoring session of the SAS project was conducted in partnership with the City Hall of Massy with educators working directly for the City Hall or indirectly for social centres in Massy. The would-be mentors were chosen according to the following criteria:

- their interest in the SAS project and especially in any new/innovative method in non-formal education for ESLs to prevent school failure and so to contribute to the policy against social exclusion in the so-called “sensitive areas” (*Zones urbaines sensibles*);
- their availability to participate in the experimentation (on a voluntary basis) in addition to their other activities;
- any former experience in the field of school mentoring.

All the educators also held a national accreditation for working with ESL as “specialised educators”. Their professional profile is social worker with a special training to support vulnerable groups such as disabled youngsters, children/youngsters at risk due to their family or social background, or because they are living in sensitive areas (reference is made to the Sensitive Urban Areas explained above).

In the first sessions (two sessions offered to “specialised educators”, November 2013

& January 2014), the training consisted in explaining the aims and goals of the SAS project. They were explained that the idea was to convince youngsters to join the training sessions consisting in both a theoretical approach and practical work (to build a project to be implemented in the future among associations). As far as the training programme offered for mentors by the SAS project is concerned (mentoring training), they were not so interested in the “general” support to be offered to youngsters as they know how to proceed. They said they had their own “professional practice”. They were much more interested in the innovative approach offered by the “detour strategy”: volunteering being presented as an alternative pedagogical approach to re-engage youngsters facing difficulties to re-engage in school. After this meeting, they tried to get in contact with the youngsters. A second session was held in January to meet them and have their feedback.

Most of the “specialised educators” said they would not have enough time to convince the youngsters they worked with, mainly already school leavers, to join the experimentation. We tried to give them more time, in February but could not get more feedback. As a result, this first attempt did not reach any conclusion; the educators didn’t have enough time to convince any youngster. Nevertheless, they keep the idea in mind for the future. In partnership with their colleagues of the City Hall, with the pedagogical support provided by the French guide published by the iriv, they will be able to speak about the volunteering approach with the youngsters.

Other sessions of the mentoring training were offered to other profiles of mentors, this time among the College Blaise Pascal- a teacher and a mediator for school. Once more the SAS project was conducted in partnership with the City Hall of Massy (in Essonne) but this time with the College Blaise Pascal. As already mentioned, personal contact existed already between the director in charge of social cohesion in the City Hall and the teacher coordinator of the “Success at School network in Essonne- V at the College Blaise Pascal. This partnership took the form of participation in a jury held after the compulsory internship youngsters have to follow in the French educational system, during the last year of college (youngsters aged 14 to 16 years).

The link with the internship was probably the most convincing part of the mentoring offered to the teacher and educator. Once more, the “general support” offered by the mentoring programme was not necessary as they knew how to proceed with youngsters but they were most interested in the “detour strategy” offered by the SAS project. They were both already involved in voluntary activities. It has played a major role in their interest and willing to join the SAS project.

They played a very practical role in the SAS implementation: by organising an information meeting together with the youngsters (March 2013), to answer their questions, to play the

go-betweens with the City hall, to inform the parents of the training sessions offered to their children for the SAS project, asking them for their permission to join as the activities were carried out on their free time, not in the College but in a meeting room offered by the City hall for extra-school activities. This time it worked and the organisation of the training sessions among youngsters could be decided in close partnership between the City Hall, the College Blaise Pascal and the French partner of the SAS, the iriv.

As a conclusion on the mentoring training offered to the mentors, different kinds of “profiles” of mentors have been involved in Essonne. The first ones - specialised educators – would have required more time as the process was quite new for them. Nevertheless the idea is still in the air and they may come back to the SAS approach at any time. The second ones – teacher and mediators in the College - have been quite reactive and active as they had already experienced volunteering themselves and so were quite receptive to the SAS approach. The third ones – professionals involved in educational policies at the City hall of Massy - have been key actors and mentors. They have been involved in all the steps of the mentoring programme with professionals among the College

3.2 Second part – involving the young people

This part of the experimentation was implemented on a voluntary basis among youngsters aged 14 to 16 years. A first meeting was held in March 2014, together with the mentors involved in the College – a teacher and mediator for school. 22 youngsters attended this introductory session aged between 14 and 16 years, of which 14 were girls and 8 were boys. Three sessions were held in the following months, half a day each, this time at the City hall of Massy. 9 youngsters- all girls- aged between 14 and 16 attended the three sessions, on a Wednesday afternoon, once a month.

The first session was dedicated to the general discussion on Volunteering and Associations, on the basis of a personal experience or knowledge they could have (on both local and national levels). The link was made with the compulsory internship they had to commit to during the last year at college: the way to find an association, the way to introduce oneself among unfamiliar people and the discovery of a new social and/or professional environment with adult people they didn't know before. During the practical part of the session, they were asked to work in two groups on an associative project they would be interested to implement in their neighbourhood. They both chose to offer to work on a project to support children who were sick or with a disability. Their teacher was not present, they were shy but curious to work with an adult they did not know – the “mentors” of the SAS (a representative of iriv and representatives of the City hall of Massy, who were formerly introduced to them during the introductory session.

The second session was dedicated to the educational and professional dimensions of volunteering. A clear link was made with their internship. The mentors insisted on the tasks they had to fulfil, the assessment made by their “employer” and during the jury (composed of teachers and professionals outside the college) where they defended the work made during their intern period (one week). The idea was to show that the process to be an intern is the same as for being a volunteer in an association. A portfolio was dispatched among them as an example of tool to identify and assess the voluntary experience, they could discover that volunteering might be considered as a real professional experience under the condition that it is properly presented, with detailed information on the association, responsibilities as a volunteer, skills and competences gained and results achieved (this portfolio was implemented in partnership between *Animafac* - an association of students and the iriv. During the practical part of the session, they described more in detail the two associative projects they had in mind. They had to work on the strategy they were to use to work with the children. The first group decided to use selected board games depending on the age of the children they will work with. The second group opted for telling tales, fairy tales or folkloric tales, selecting the tales according to the gender (girl or boy) of the children they would work with.

The third session was focused on diversity and the social inclusion volunteering should enhance. As the concepts might be more difficult to be understood, a visit on the ground was organised in order for the youngsters to meet volunteers and to discover two different associations with various aims and profiles of volunteers. The association “*Espace singulier*” was chosen as it has developed support for families with disabled children since 2008, Another association was selected “*Choeur qui mouve*”, created in the past two years, whose main objective is to develop local choirs for people with different backgrounds (all ages, all genders, all social backgrounds) to sing together. The youngsters were most interested to have the opportunity to meet “real volunteers” and to be able to ask questions about voluntary involvement and the main barriers they may face, such as the issue of their age (volunteering is officially possible from the age of 16 in France, the age when individuals are permitted to work) and the insurance questions linked to it. Some of them offered to spend time for both of the associations.

The two associative projects they had worked on could be implemented in another framework; the “*Ville, vie, vacances*” (City, Life, Holidays) device meant to support children in sensitive areas (*Zones urbaines sensibles*) to spend their leisure time productively during the holidays. To summarise, the volunteering activities implemented by the youngsters included: the participation to the first meeting (March), the participation to the 3 sessions (April-May). The role of the mentors was to explain them the theoretical aspects of a volunteering (institutional framework, skills and competences acquired, requirement for being a volunteer/ a student / a worker, reasons for being a volunteering,

cultural and diversity contexts) together with the practical way to implement a project among an association, so to be “useful” and “active” in an association.

A certificate of attendance was dispatched among the youngsters in July, signed by their teacher (College Blaise Pascal, their school), the Director of the Social Cohesion (city hall of Massy) and the director of the iriv (French partner of the SAS project). It may be added to their curriculum vitae as an evidence of “social activity” fulfilled.

3.3 Feedback – results achieved

The results of the experimentation conducted in Essonne have been quite positive. The youngsters involved in the SAS experimentation were reliable and attended the three sessions, on a voluntary basis; worked together on two associative projects and some of them brought some material to support their work (board games). Some have faced difficulties at school, other were “at risk” to have difficulties and other succeeded at school. These “mixed” profiles were important in order to avoid any stigmatization. Moreover, some of them were interested in becoming volunteers in the associations they visited. This was the first time they discovered this part of their city as they usually stay in and around their neighbourhood.

The mentors involved in the SAS experimentation have also actively participated. The partnership with the City hall, and overall the involvement of the Direction of Social cohesion with professionals convinced by the positive impact of volunteering among youngsters, and volunteers themselves, have been a key success factor. With their institutional support, the College Blaise Pascal, and the teacher personally in charge of the RRS accepted to join and to inform the youngsters. Her personal support and the good image she had among her youngsters have definitely had a positive impact on the youngsters.

The combination of theoretical and practical content for the pedagogy (in the volunteer training) designed by the SAS project was important. Youngsters wanted both to be supported in their activities and to have concrete feedback of their voluntary work. The most difficult part was to explain that some “social” activities existed, “done for nothing”, for others you do not know who might need your support. Another crucial point was to make a link between a voluntary experience and the internship they had to do at the end of their compulsory education, considered a contact with “professional life”.

The context of the experimentation contributed to its success because of these factors:

- personal involvement of both the director for social cohesion and the teacher in charge of the RRS/SAS,
- institutional relations between the City Hall and the College Blaise Pascal,
- a support by a teacher among the youngsters (first meeting of information held at the College Blaise Pascal)
- a support by professionals of the City Hall : the training sessions were held at the City hall (a texto was sent before each session to the youngsters to remind them of the session)
- A contact between the City Hall and some associations of the City, *Espace Singulier et Choeur qui Mouve*;
- A last meeting on the ground gathering professionals of the City hall, the youngsters and the associations with the mentors in charge of the SAS approach
- A reward- a "certificate of attendance" signed by the director for social cohesion at the City hall of Massy, the teacher in charge of RRS at the College Blaise Pascal and the mentor in charge of the SAS project, dispatched among the youngsters
- A weblog implemented to support the experimentation (2). It explains the general context of the project, the European team, the team in Essonne, the French policy implemented to struggle against early school leaving, the results achieved and the useful contacts in France
- A guide published (1), reminding of the points explained in the weblog, making a summary of the experimentation

4. The next step - from experimentation to the sustainability of the Success at School project in Essonne

The Success at School is repeated the year 2014-2015 with the City Hall of Massy in collaboration with the College Blaise Pascal. The teacher in charge of the RRS/SAS project has been keen to involve other youngsters. Teachers may organise "social or leisure activities" in the framework of an optional course called "Knowledge of professional life". In this context a new "campaign for volunteering" was launched in November 2014. More than 30 youngsters attended and 15 registered. This time t 3 training sessions were

offered in January 2015: before their compulsory internship and just after in order to make a closer link with this activity. They will be followed between February and June 2015 by monthly sessions.

At the same time, the City Hall of Massy has dispatched the Guide published for the SAS project in Essonne (1) among professionals working in the field of the Success at school network (*Réussite éducative en Essonne*). It offers to welcome the youngsters from the College, willing to be volunteers, in the weekly workshops they offer, each Wednesday afternoon. The guide published in Essonne (1) will be used both among the mentors ("specialised educators" or teachers) and the youngsters to explain the institutional context (struggling against early school leaving-ESL, both in France and Europe), the pedagogical approach (offering volunteering as an alternative pedagogical approach to struggle against ESL) and the example of a successful experimentation (the partnership together with the City Hall of Massy and the College Blaise Pascal).

The conditions are met to build the sustainability of the SAS pedagogy in France, inspired by the initiative implemented in Essonne: promoting volunteering among youngsters to re-engage them at school, enhancing social inclusion and allowing them to enrich formal and informal learning. The partnership built between a local authority (the City hall of Massy), a school (the College Blaise Pascal) and an organisation involved in Volunteering (the iriv) for the SAS project to implement the SAS project in Essonne could inspire other experiences in France. The guide published may be used both a pedagogical tool and an example of good practice. It explains the pedagogical approach and gives all the steps to be followed to repeat the initiative. At the same time, the weblog designed (2) has been useful both to conduct the implementation of the SAS project in Essonne and as a dissemination tool for the future.

Conclusion

The Success at school project has highlighted the link between Volunteering and Education. It has offered an alternative pedagogical strategy for youngsters facing difficulties at school or having already dropped up to re-engage with school on the basis of a positive experience which both improves their self-confidence but also allows them to acquire skills and competences needed at school but also for their future professional career.

The SAS project first designed a training programme in order to explain the main value of a voluntary experience and the concrete ways to promote such an involvement among youngsters, taking into account the skills and competences youngsters could be able to develop, making the link between school, association and the labour market. To

complement, the SAS offered a training for mentors, understood in the broad sense of teachers, social workers, volunteers... in order to support youngsters to bridge the gap between "places" of learning (school, association...).

The next step for the Success at school project, and a crucial recommendation to be made to policy makers would be to integrate in the pedagogical strategies to combat Early School Leaving (ESL) Volunteering as an "official" alternative pedagogical approach to re-engage in education youngsters at risk of dropping out. Learning by doing has already been promoted in innovative pedagogical strategies. Learning by contributing to the Community might be tomorrow's main goal in education: being prepared to be a future worker (on the labour market) but also being an active citizen (in society).

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CHAPTER 11:

The report of an experimentation journey: the case of ASSFAM

Magali Ciais and Samira Youssouf

The ASSFAM experimentation was implemented by Samira Youssouf, animator and project manager, and by Magali Ciais, manager and in charge of the Paris ASSFAM district. In this chapter we are going to explain how we tried to apply the SAS project framework in the context of our intervention area in Paris and in Seine- Saint-Denis. In doing this, we want to first of all thank all those who agreed to follow us in this adventure: the volunteers and employees of the associations, the stakeholders, the teachers and, above all, the young people for their participation and involvement. Although at the beginning we were wondering, what the experimentation was and what we could expect, thanks to all our participants, it was a journey full of questions, laughter, emotions and challenges.

In the first part of this chapter we are going to explain how we chose were to carry out the experimentation and especially how we chose the participants for the experimentation, and the consequences of this choice. As the young people to be involved in the SAS project could be either at risk of early school leaving (ESL) or those who has already abandoned school, we chose to experiment with both SAS target population. In the second part of the chapter we focus on the experimentation process by introducing the mentors, the associations and especially the approach used to increase the involvement of all the participants. In the third part we describe the activities more precisely and we explain our adaptations strategy while detailing the volunteering initiatives undertaken by the youngsters. The last

section provides some qualitative results of the experimentation journey.

1. Prevent early school leaving or go back to school: two different types of young people

In order to take into account all the SAS target population in our experimentation, we decided to target two different and representatives groups of ESL: the potential ones and the ones who had already 'dropped out'. This first section explains how we chose our experimentation field in order to match with this choice.

1.1 Two organizations, two different educational styles

To achieve our objective, the experimentation took place in two different organisations: a vocational high school and an association, which is responsible/look after youngsters between the age of 16 and 25 who want to realize their civic service.

» The high school, an academic place

The school is a vocational high school located in Seine-Saint-Denis, in a Paris suburb. It is part of an area defined by the National Education ministry as a "zone d'éducation prioritaire (ZEP)" (priority educational zone). In such areas, the schools have additional resources and greater autonomy in order to deal with the educational and social difficulties of the pupils. The schools located in these areas have to struggle against early school leaving although they have to follow an academic programme. However, they are encouraged to use innovative pedagogical methods. Therefore, in this high school, teachers had already been exposed to alternative educational methods and this awareness was a very important reason for our choice as it would have allowed us to complete the experimentation in time.

The journey started by contacting a head teacher in April 2013 in order to begin the experimentation the next school year, in September 2013. She linked us with the headteacher of the class Service de Proximité et Vie Locale (SPVL) and we organized a meeting to introduce the project and how we wanted to realize it.

» The association, an alternative educational context/space

Our second partner was an association, which is responsible for youngsters between the age of 16 and 25 who engage/carry out their civic service, that is, a voluntary involvement to serve the common good and open to youngsters between the age of 16 and 25. No

qualifications are required and it lasts for a maximum of 12 months. This association runs a programme called “Booster” which has quite a similar aim as that of the SAS project: enabling young dropouts to be involved to be of service to others and using this involvement as a springboard. When we heard about that, we thought it was a good idea to include them in the SAS project.

Since we already had professional contacts with the association, it was easier to forge a relationship with them and to build a collaboration. First, we organized a meeting with employees of the associations and we put forward suggestions on how to present the SAS project to the youngsters and we also present to them a perspective of volunteering mission for the youngsters in our association. We then organized a meeting with seventeen youngsters along with their coordinator educator. We introduced the SAS project and the ASSFAM project we proposed them to participate in. Most of the young people were very interested but the educator told us that only 8 youngsters could be involved in this project as part of their civic service. So, this group (we will call it group 2) was composed of 8 youngsters.

1.2 Youngsters with different relationship with the formal school system but whole included in an educational programme.

The two groups we worked with were different in many ways most of the youngsters in both groups shared a common exposure to a difficult social reality. As they live in suburbs area characterized by a high level of poverty and stigmatized for its potential violence, they were exposed to possible discrimination. Moreover, although most of them did not have any links with associations, they were very concerned about solidarity values and social issues.

- Included in a educational programme

Considering the time we had for the experimentation, we chose two groups who were already involved in some type of organization, that is a school and an association, and took part in a programme, either academic or alternative one. The limitations of this approach is that we cannot say whether the SAS approach can work with youngsters who have no links with any organizations. The advantage of our approach was that we could include the SAS in an academic programme thanks to the enthusiasm of the students and the teachers. Therefore, the group 1, comprising the young people still at school, is more of a captive audience than the second group. However, despite the fact that the students participated voluntarily, they were certainly influenced by the schooling environment.

Group 2 is part of an association. Unlike school which is compulsory up to the age of 16, the law does not oblige the young people in group 2 to attend and therefore this group is a little bit more unstable and less captive. Any of them are at school, but the “Booster” programme allows the minors to benefit from a specific support in voluntary educational institutions. This formula encourages them, by an adapted educational programme, to reconnect with school. Although the young people above the age of 18 were not in school, we managed to motivate a many of them by presenting the SAS project and the ASSFAM project and 8 participated in the experimentation.

- **Different stage of relation with the scholar system**

Group 1 consisted of a class composed by 25 youngsters, 19 girls and 6 boys, who because they were still at school, were also the youngest (between 15 to 18) and we cannot consider them ESL. However, because of the economical and social background of the area, we can say that they were at risk of leaving school early so they met the targeting criteria for being included in the SAS project as in fact 1/3 usually tend to dropped out during this class. Although 30 students were enrolled in the class, there were always some who were absent although every time we met with the cohort, they were no more than 25 present.

The choice of this cohort all belonging to the same classroom is particularly relevant. First because most of the students told us that they did not choose those subjects and this fact, among others, can have a negative impact on their involvement and motivation and thus lead to disaffection and withdrawal including leaving school early. This is why we and the teacher believed that a volunteering activity related to social issues and within a social context would help them. Indeed, we believed that it could increase their motivation insofar that it affords the young people to put into actions their school learning in a really meaningful context.

Secondly, since some young people in this classroom displayed behavioural difficulties, particularly in relation to authority, the relationship with the mentor, to be detailed further in the next section, could have afforded them as risk-free space in which to experiment a different kind of relationship with adults: a non academic or parental one.

As already mentioned, the second group was different and older than the first one. It consisted of youngsters who had already abandoned school and were out of the scholar system. Six of them had spent one or two years with no links with any organization and therefore had not opportunities to be involved in activities. Others had joined the programme offered by the association soon after leaving school. This group had no behavior problems or particular conflict with authority, they chose freely to join and we believe that the alternative pedagogy used by the organization promoted a more equal relationship.

2. Mentors and associations in the community: their involvement throughout the project

2.1 Different types of organizations but almost the same area of intervention

We worked with six associations, which were chosen since their activities matched the needs and wishes of the young people. They were:

The French Catholic Support (le Secours Catholique Français) is an organization which belongs to the international foundation called Caritas. The French Catholic Support tries to combat exclusion in all its forms. It acts in particular with persons in precarious situation, unemployed, elderly persons, persons in extreme poverty, foreigners waiting to receive housing benefits or the processing of the documentation to stay in the country. This organization is divided into several delegations, and Assfam is working with the Seine-Saint-Denis delegation, in the Paris north suburb.

Une chorba pour tous is a local organization which tries to fight all forms of precariousness. It commits to offer hot meals for the most needy and to give them the means to gain back the control of their life by offering literacy workshops, computer workshops, school monitoring, and actions for the health and wellbeing, and access to social rights.

ACSC (Catholic Support Cities Association) is an organization which fights exclusion, assisting people in precarious or with a disability. It ensures reception, accommodation, social support and integration.

The social and cultural center A. Croizat is located in Pierrefitte, a city of the Paris north suburb. It welcomes people (young, adults, families) of the town and offers them many activities (cultural excursions, sewing workshops, literacy workshops, social services, etc.).

The Scouts et Guides de France is a catholic scout movement which offers boys and girls a life space meeting their dreams, actions, projects, life in the community, etc. It also provides an opportunity for adults to support the young people. The members of this organization live by the Gospel.

The French Red Cross is an organization which helps people in difficulty in France and in other countries. It acts in several fields: emergency and first aid, social action, health and assisted living, training and international solidarity.

These organizations are providing activities and target different people but all of them are working in the area of social care, as we are, and help the people in need in different ways by providing services, such as: food, accommodation, French learning, social help, leisure activities, and many more.

Although they support a wide range of people, young people, especially minors, are not volunteers they normally include or work with. So the SAS project was the opportunity to welcome young volunteers and to broaden their recruitment. Moreover, in line with the SAS objectives, they wanted to be useful and to give a chance to ESL to get back to school or to continue school.

These associations are different type of organizations. Some are made of only volunteers, while others also have paid employees. As a consequence, the latter type tends to have a more formal approach to welcoming and working with young people. . If we had more time for the experimentation, we feel we would have been able to introduce this component to help the youngsters in their choice of a association.

2.2 Mobilise all the partners throughout the experimentation

One particularity of our experimentation was that the associations participated at every stage, since the beginning of the project. They were part of the stakeholders meeting and participated to the training of the young people about volunteering. They were present at the high school and then they welcomed the youngsters on their premises in order to show the youngsters what volunteering is concretely. They nominated mentors among their volunteers or employees to support the youngsters and some of the mentors were also part of the stakeholders. Then, they welcomed the youngsters who wanted to become volunteers and they made them participate to the volunteer missions. One of our stakeholders noticed that this kind of participation throughout the process was their favourite mode of involvement.

2.3 Inexperienced tutors but rooted in their social practices, volunteering missions and personal values

We chose to take mentors from the associations involved in the project. It seemed to be more relevant because it would be easier for them to help the youngster to integrate in the volunteers' team; and they would also be more able to answer the mentees' questions about the association, its functioning, and so on. In recruiting the mentors, we described the kind of mentors we wanted for the experimentation and the person responsible in the

associations chose them, their involvement was based on their free will. After they were appointed as mentors, they also became members of the stakeholders group.

We recruited 12 mentors, 5 women and 7 men aged between 20 and 62 years, 7 employees and 5 volunteers of the associations. We could not say if they were experienced in mentoring but seven mentors had experience of working with youngsters. Most of them were really active persons and they were a good role model of citizenship. Each mentor supported one or two mentees.

According to the mentors, it is essential to mentor these youngsters because of their difficulties and a lack of motivation for school. If they are mentored, it is easier for them to feel valued and to learn new skills. The mentors presented the mentoring as a way to value/acknowledge/recognise the youngsters and to share experiences.

"It's a way to show them that they have a lot of skills, that they can be useful for people in need and for themselves too." A, women, 39, mentor in the SAS project

Mentoring is a new approach, different from the classic teaching in which it seems to be easier to establish a good relationship with the youngsters.

"They immediately understood that I wasn't a teacher and they talked easily with me. A teacher represents the institution and the authority." S, women, 25, mentor in the SAS project

The mentors also experienced some difficulties, such as:

Translating experiences into formalized skills;

Having enough time to really support the youngster in a qualitative way;

Channelling a group;

Convincing the association to welcome minors;

Explaining to the youngsters what could be achieved in practice (i.e., what one can do or cannot do; the necessity to adapt to the structure of the organisation, to the public, to the financial possibilities; project methodology for the volunteering missions...).

3. The experimentation: an organized process that allowed personal initiative

The ASSFAM experimentation was quite organized, may be too much! Nevertheless in order to promote empowerment of all the participants, we tried to leave the room for individual initiative.

3.1. A training process adapted to the youngsters and mentors' availability and needs

The mentors training

The project began few months late so we worked on the mentor training with a delay. Simultaneously, we had the opportunity to begin the project earlier than expected, we did not have the time to carry out the mentor training as it was later formalized. We needed to start training the mentors as soon as possible not to delay the project and the experimentation any further.

Since the mentors were part of our stakeholders, it was easier to train them. The training, as we did it, was divided into three parts:

Part 1: Training meeting

Part of a stakeholders' meeting, it was the occasion to present to them the mentoring process, to discuss and to exchange some practices and to talk about the organizational issues. We used brainstorming and SAS tools to make them knowledgeable of the mentoring process.

Part 2: Individual interviews

This part took the form of individual meetings or phone calls. It aimed to analyse the individual practice of each mentor so as to improve it and his positioning as a mentor. We did not organised a collective meeting because of the mentors' working schedule and other commitments.

Part 3: Evaluation meeting

This last meeting was set up to analyze the mentoring practices and to evaluate the SAS mentoring. During this meeting, we also researched a case study and discussed about the possible sustainability of the project. It was also an opportunity to collect missing data and further information.

Volunteer training for the young people

As agreed by the SAS partnership, we modified and adapted the volunteer training for the young people by taking into account that some of the young people would find it difficult to stay focused for two hours or more. We decided to make the training less academic and more interactive. It took place in three phases: the interventions of the associations, the visits and the pedagogical workshops.

Phase 1: The interventions

First of all, we (ASSFAM) met the young people in their classroom to introduce the project and to explain to them what volunteering is and what its benefits are. These were the objectives of module 1 of the training course. The objectives of modules 2, 3 and 5 were approached through the several interventions. Indeed the associations came to the high school to present to the class their missions and to increase the youngster's motivation about volunteering. The associations used their own tools and games to be engaging and to keep the youngsters' attention.

Phase 2 : The visits

In phase 2, the youngsters visited the associations so as to experience in concrete terms how the associations worked, what volunteering is. This was also an opportunity for the young people to meet volunteers. It was the occasion to begin to create links between the youngsters and the volunteers and to integrate them. They are mainly the objectives of the modules 2 and 6 of the training guide.

Phase 3: The pedagogical workshops

The pedagogical workshops were the opportunity to explain to the youngsters the educational dimension of a voluntary experience through the preparation of a collective volunteering activity. We also approached the topic of how volunteering was useful to build a professional future. These two objectives are part of the modules 3 and 4.

3.2 The youngsters volunteering activities and initiatives

As an unexpected result, the high school administration created a specific legal agreement between the school, the associations, the parents and the pupils to permit the involvement of minors into the volunteering activities. The two groups of young people took part in two different activities.

Group 1: the clothes collection

After the volunteering, and especially after the visits to the associations, the young people in the school decided to organize a clothes collection in their high school on behalf of several partners associations. The collection was realized on March 14th 2013.

To prepare for it, we developed a pedagogical workshop to explain how to set up a project with the 5W method. It was a simple method based on the basic questions upon a project: What? Why? Who? Where? When?, they could understand and use it fast and it helped them to build their initiative in a effective way. As a result, the young people produced posters to advertise the collection/initiative and displayed them on the walls of their high school. After that, they toured different classrooms to present their project and the clothes collection initiative to the others schoolmates. Throughout this process they developed several skills, like the setting up a project, the development of means of communication, public speaking, etc. They also set up and managed a stand to collect the clothes during their breaks. Then, they selected the clothes and they gave them to the associations.

Thanks to the project and the initiative, they participated to a contest called "Mosaïque de talents" organized by the department of Seine-Saint-Denis and whose aim is to add value and recognize the skills and competences of the youngsters in the *neighborhood*. The class presented the SAS project and the clothes collection initiative and they won the award of "the talent of the civic and solidarity involvement". During the day of the ceremony, they managed a stand to present the SAS and the activity they achieved, with photos and posters, to a large audience. They also presented the interest to be a volunteer in each association they knew of in order to promote volunteering in those structures.

The contest allowed them to present their school pathway to other youngsters and to make them discover it. It was a very relevant way to make them feel valued.

Group 2: valorization of the contribution of elderly migrants

Group 2 participated to an ASSFAM project called "Migr'acteurs et Migr'artistes". It consisted of collecting testimonies of elderly migrants who came to France between 1950-1980 and worked in the Ile-De France region. The idea was to enhance migrants' contribution to the construction of the regional identity. We intended to publish a book gathering all these testimonies and organizing several exhibitions to present all the results of this project (pictures, texts, etc.). This action was interesting to both the young people and the older migrants: it permitted the elderly migrants to create a social link with persons living outside of their migrant workers' hostel; and permitted the youngsters to experience volunteering and intergenerational relationship and also to understand the history of immigration in France.

For the youngsters, the project was also a way to experience professional activities in social community work and maybe to chose that as a school career. Most of the young people have an immigration background and to be involved in a project with elderly migrants valorised their background and the skills attached to it (cultural skills, language skills, etc.). They were able to share their difficulties with the elderly migrants who encouraged them to continue studying.

The youngsters and the elderly migrants met several times to get to know each other and to create a link. The youngsters prepared a brunch and some activities (card game, checkers game, etc.). Those meetings were convivial moments and they discussed about everything. We noticed that the youngsters appreciated these moments because they were able to learn more about migration and about those people who came to France to fill the lack of labour.

After all these collective meetings, each youngster interviewed an elderly migrant and asked questions about his migration route. They managed these interviews with their mentors (ASSFAM employee) because they were not trained to do this alone. However, through this experience they learned how to conduct an individual interview in order to collect testimonies and life stories. The youngsters decided to organize an intergenerational visit with the migrants at the National Archives in order to have some historical perspectives about migration. The migrants highlighted to the youngsters the meaning of history and the impact on today for everyone.

Individual activities

18 of the youngsters of in the high school also contributed to several half-day volunteering in the partner associations. They were involved in clothing distribution, food distribution, cultural activities with children, work with persons living in a social rehabilitation and accommodation centre, etc.

About the group 2, the youngsters realised individual interviews with the elderly migrants. They had to develop some skills like the empathy, the patience, etc.

3.3. A case study: B.

B. is the eldest in her class. She is not really pleased about that. She repeated her class twice, and that is why she is still in the first year of the high school. She fulfilled her volunteering in a social rehabilitation and accommodation centre welcoming persons with high social difficulties. She had the chance to be a volunteer there because she is an adult.

Indeed, the youngsters under 18 couldn't not become volunteer in this structure because the task is too difficult. So, B. felt favoured and valued. The relationship with her mentor was really good and based on respect.

Her mentor proposed her to do a range of activities like a table tennis tournament. She listened to the residents and took the initiative to bring a popcorn machine for a cinema workshop. She showed a keen interest. Moreover, she had also started her civic service in another social rehabilitation and accommodation centre but it was stopped because of a bad relationship with her new mentor. She discussed this bad experience with her first mentor. This incident showed her the reality of the world of work and after taking part in the SAS project she is now able to face this kind of difficulty. She is more mature, she now has a better idea of what she wants to do at school and professionally. She continued her volunteering at the first accommodation centre and she kept contact with her SAS mentor who helped her to write her CV for example.

Her SAS mentor said about her that she was attentive, discreet, careful about what she said or did, showed good manners and wanted to succeed in life. It was a good experience for both of them.

4. Qualitative results: "it was great!"

We asked all the youngsters who participated to write a small report about their experience during the SAS project which are reported in this section by theme.

Self confidence - This project enabled the youngsters to gain more self-confidence.

"This project helped me to be more confident and also to help poor people and he gave me more idea about my school orientation".

« I felt proud of myself and of the all class for our efforts, I felt more generous and mature »

Learning: communication skills - As a result of the volunteering, the young people became more able to speak in front of a large audience and to put forward their opinion. They learned how to help people and how this can impact on them: they feel more adult now.

"I learn to listen to the people, to adapt to many different situations"

"I really enjoy this project and I learned and transmitted some of my values like respect, work as a team, each of us brought some thing and that what a team work is"

"This project opened my eyes and I want to continue volunteering"

Behaviour/team spirit - All of them learned how cooperate by working in groups. They put aside their disagreements to help the others, because according to them this was important.

"This project was great, we learned to weld and to give"

"I think that this project helped us to change and to come closer and has ease tensions between us"

"We realized something all together now everybody is talking and no one stays alone"

Finally, Group 1 learned that they can succeed. They experienced this by organising the clothes collection, and by sharing their life experience with others showing them that they have something valuable to share with others. Group 2 learnt that elder migrants helped to build the country and especially the region where they, as young people, live in. They also learned that this participation should be recognised and that this is a valuable lesson in building their own identity as the children of migrant themselves

Deal with "emotions" - The mentoring was particularly useful in helping young people to learn how to cope with the strong emotions they encountered during the volunteering activities.

Change in what school means - Most of the youngsters of Group 1 planned to continue their schooling. Most importantly, four of them discovered their vocation and they changed their school orientation during the year. About the other youngsters (group 2), five of them plan to return to school while the others want to find a job.

Conclusion

Although the project is formally over, being part of it has created many opportunities, ideas, and actions to discuss. Can the project continue? For us one of the key issues for the sustainability of the SAS project is the building of the network between the stakeholders: the teachers, the associations, the mentors, and the young people. This needs a facilitator to put them in contact, work together, transmit the values and lessons learnt in the SAS

project. The teacher was so supportive and asked us to continue. We also have received encouraging feedback about possible new funding, and therefore new opportunities for a new SAS journey.

CHAPTER 12:

National case study – Portugal

Adriana Albuquerque, Teresa Seabra and Sandra Mateus

I - Introduction

This chapter shows how the Success at School (SAS) experimentation took place in Portugal. We will begin by analysing the issue of early school leaving (ESL) in the country as a whole and in the specific regions where the experimentation took place, as well as discussing the importance of some statistic indicators for the study of this issue. This more general outline will be followed by a description of the settings, institutions and young people and mentors who participated in the experimentation. A further section will explain the selection criteria used. A fourth section describes the mentoring and volunteering activities and further provides results from the internal evaluation. Finally, the last section provides a reflection on the lesson learnt by the Portuguese team, as well as suggestions and recommendations for future practice.

Early School Leaving (ESL) in Portugal: an outline

The topic of early school leaving in Portugal is a complex issue, due to the ambiguous nature of its statistical definition and to the political conditions permeating the process of collecting this sort of data. One of the reasons behind the political sensitivity of the ESL issue rests with the fact that school rankings are gaining relevance in shaping public

perception of educational quality. It appears that a high failure rate weighs less negatively than a high early school leaving rate in the context of schools' capacity to recruit the 'desired' type of students. For this reason, schools tend to conflate the numbers of absenteeism, continuous absenteeism, school leaving and early school leaving under the "umbrella" category of absenteeism, when reporting to the Portuguese Ministry of Education (Estevão & Álvares, 2013).

In this light, it is therefore important to read national statistics with a critical eye. The official numbers of ESL gathered by the national statistics institute (INE), for example, and recently reported in a European Commission report (2013) show a 20,8% ESL total rate in 2012, with boys being the most affected (27,1% against only 14,3% of girls), while there is little differences between native born students (20,9%) and foreign born students (20,3%).

An analysis of the school leaving rates in Portugal (Fig. 1) shows that the proportion of resident population between the ages of 10 and 15 years-old who left school without concluding the 9th grade is 1,58% in the country as a whole, and slightly more critical in the Lisbon region (1,6%). A focus on the three municipalities where the Portuguese Success at School (SAS) experimentation took place – Amadora, Loures and Odivelas, whose values are highlighted in the graphic – shows that they have the highest school leaving rates in Lisbon, and are also way above the regional and national average, with the most extreme case being that of Amadora with a 2,34% leaving rate, followed by Loures (with 1,72%) and Odivelas (with 1,59%). The selection of participating schools was based on this data.

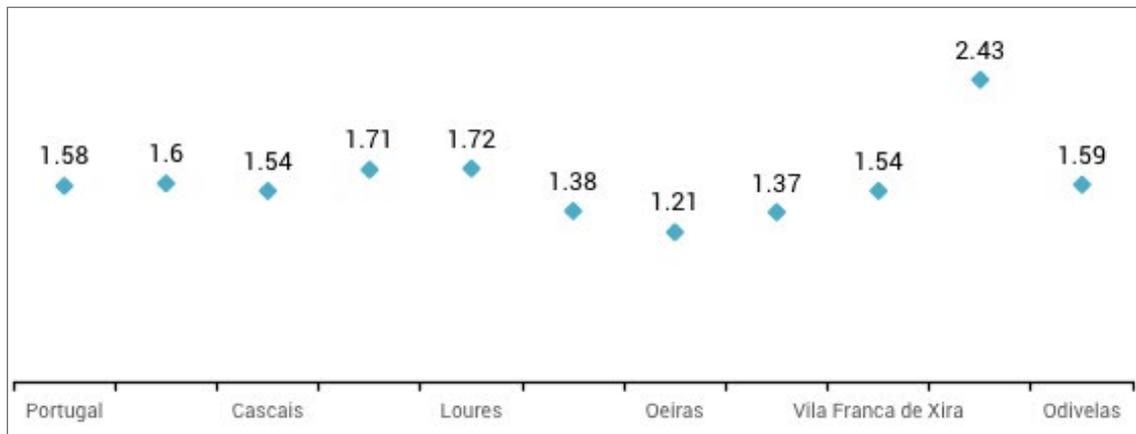


Fig. 1 – compared school leaving rates in lisbon's municipalities (total %) in 2011

Fig. 2 and 3 also show that the above mentioned regions also have the lowest retention rate, a measure considered as the best alternative, given that it is one of the few school failure

indicators retrieved consistently at both national and regional level. The experimentation regions appear once again with some of the highest rates. The data shows that the Amadora region is once again the least performing region, with 15,9% of its enrolled students not transitioning to the next school grade, followed by Loures with a 14,6% rate, and by Odivelas with 11,9%.

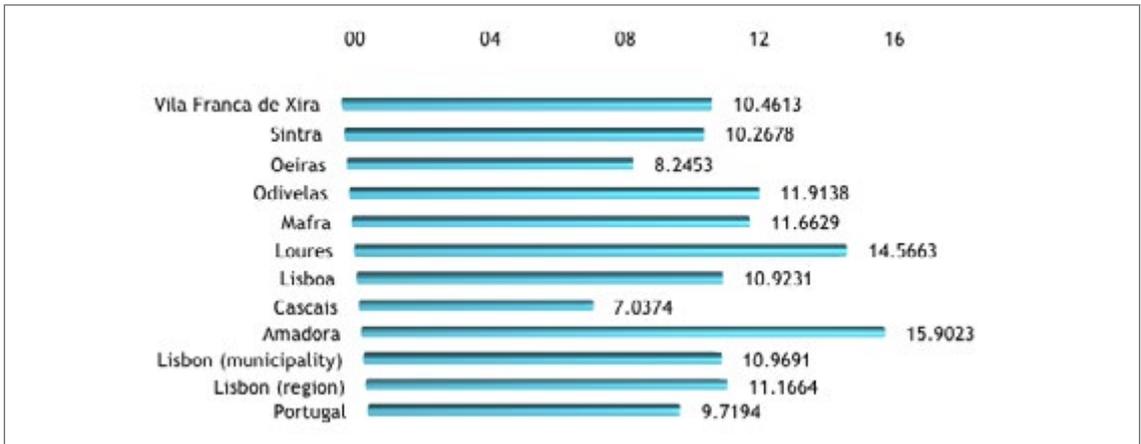


Fig. 2 – grade retention rates in lisbon's municipalities (total %) in 2012/2013

The same disproportion in relation to national retention rates happens at all educational levels, being more marked at primary II (including 5th and 6th grade) and lower secondary levels (from 7th to 9th grade).

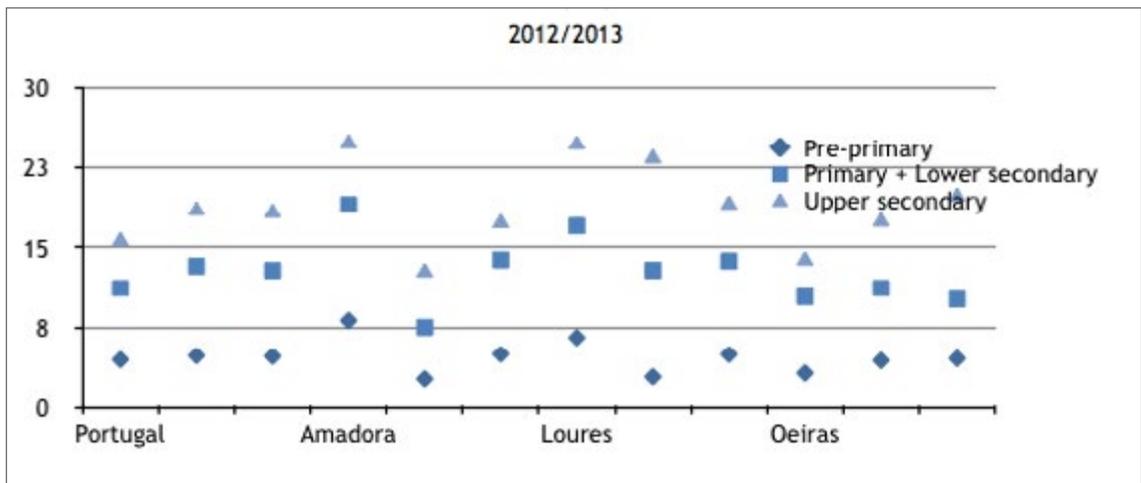


Fig. 3 – Grade Retention Rates In Lisbon's Municipalities (%) By Educational Level In 2012/2013

II – CONTEXT OF THE EXPERIMENTATION

Settings and institutions

All the four settings and institutions selected for the development of the experimentation are located in the periphery of Lisbon. They belong to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, more precisely to the three municipalities of Amadora, Loures and Odivelas, already mentioned above. Despite the fact that these areas reflect, on many levels, the general features of Portuguese society as a whole – the accelerated rhythm of aging and the constant decrease in birth rates, for instance – they are also less marked in these locations, due to the affordability of house prices and the general cost of living which benefits young and middle-aged people more than that of central Lisbon.

That being said, the social and economic context in which the schools and associations are located is often acknowledged as being less privileged. The geographic isolation, almost ghettoization of some of the places is a defining characteristic of areas such as Alto da Cova da Moura, located in Amadora. Our local stakeholder for this territory is a non-profit organization and/or community project working for the human, social and cultural development of the suburb, called “Moinho da Juventude” (*Youth Mill*). It develops socio-cultural projects, job-searching activities and training for children, youngsters and adults residing in the neighbourhood (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 - Alto Da Cova Da Moura: “Moinho Da Juventude” Association (In Damaia)

The primary school of Damaia (Fig. 5) is integrated in a T.E.I.P. project (*Educational Territories of Priority Intervention*), also in the Amadora region. This educational programme was an initiative of the 18th Portuguese government, and it has been running since 2010 with a significant amount of financial

and human resources focused on primary schools. Damaia's school fits the programme's profile since it is a public school with growing discipline problems and a disadvantaged student population. Since the beginning of the T.E.I.P. programme, the school community reckons there has been significant improvement on school results (Seabra, et. al., 2014).



Fig. 5 – Damaia's' School

In Odivelas, the municipality launched a programme in 2010 called "SEI!" – School Success and Integration, for children up to the last year of basic education at risk of school failure and/or leaving. This programme prioritises cultural-mediating activities and career advice in the schools that choose to implement it, namely, with awareness sessions together with teachers, school mediators and psychologists. One of the local schools (Fig. 6) was contacted by the municipality and showed interest in being part of the SAS experimentation, enrolling some of its school mediators and teachers in our mentoring training in addition to the "SEI!" project's team.



Fig. 6 – Odivelas' School



Fig. 7 - Apelação: "Ibisco" Theatre (In Loures)

Finally, the last selected settings were a school and a local theatre/cultural association in the Loures' municipality. The school was selected based on the fact that it is integrated in a T.E.I.P. project, like Damaia's school, and it faces a considerable high school failure and early school leaving rate.

Fig. 8 provides a summary of the stakeholders involved in the experimentation activities, as well as the extent to which they participated in the project. Most of them were involved throughout – that is, from the first contact with the Portuguese SAS team to the final steps of the activities. However, Apelação school and IBISCO theatre, both in the Loures region, dropped out of the experimentation after having participated in mentors' training and right before the start of the volunteering and mentoring stage. This was due to time constraints, despite having shown great interest for the project and having been a refreshing addition to the group of mentors during the training, since some of them were, at a time in their lives, school dropouts themselves, having, therefore, extremely personal motivation for being mentors to young people at risk, as well as having.

Region	Municipality	Name of Institution	Type of institution	Level of involvement
Amadora	Damaia	Damaia school	Primary level school	Total
	Damaia	"Moinho da Juventude" (Youth Mill)	Community association	Total

Region	Municipality	Name of Institution	Type of institution	Level of involvement
Odivelas	Odivelas	Project "SEI!" (School Success and Integration)	Municipality	Total
Loures	Apelação	Apelação school	Primary level school	Active in the first steps of the project's national implementation
	Apelação	IBISCO theatre	Cultural association	Active iproject's national Implementation

Fig. 8 – Summary Of Stakeholder Institutions And Respective Settings Involved in The Portuguese Sas Project

The young people

This section provides information about the young people, specifically about the selection process and their engagement.

Selection process: breaking stereotypes about school success and failure

The Portuguese SAS team thought it best to leave the selection of the young people to the local stakeholder institutions since they were closer to the realities of the young people who could benefit from the initiative. Each institution, from the schools to the local association to the municipality's project "SEI!", made it clear, since the first meetings, that they knew at least some specific students who could be reengaged in education through an initiative such as the SAS project.

This proximity to the young people's realities was of key importance for two reasons. First, in order to avoid aprioristic selection methods based on abstract and fallible assumptions about school failure and school success. Second, and closely related to the first, because, as mentioned already, statistics about ESL are far removed from the young people's lives and therefore they do little to empathise with young people's difficulties. Leaving this process in the hands of our stakeholders proved to be a positive decision since we managed to put together a group of young people very diverse in terms of age, gender, academic trajectory and psychological traits, as we will see below.

The young people: levels of engagement in the project and young people's background

In total, 20 young people out of 45 who were contacted and 22 who enrolled participated in at least one modality of the project (volunteering and/or mentoring). Due to the diversity of the settings and of the selection methods, this process was variable and so were its outcomes. For example, the "SEI!" project, in close partnership with Odivelas school, received a student who volunteered to participate after having heard about the project by one of their teachers. This also explains the higher number of young people enrolled (five) than contacted (four), in Fig. 9. The association "Moinho da Juventude" had the highest number of young people contacted (thirty) due to the large scale dissemination of an open session that reached over 40 young people, both by email and in person. Damaia school had a steady number of young people enrolled and participating in all the modalities of the project (six).

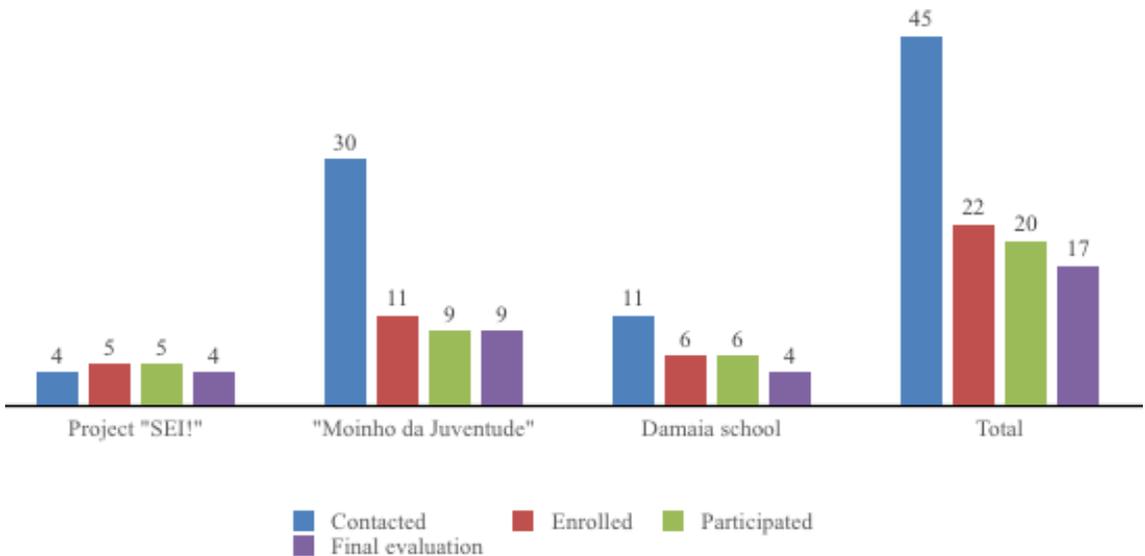


Fig. 9 - Enrollment And Participation Of Young People In Portugal by Setting

As can be seen, two young people withdrew after enrolling in the project. This was mainly due to geographic mobility difficulties associated with their locality outside of Lisbon, either permanently or during summer vacation.

The social profile of the young people participating in the project was quite balanced. The proportion of boys/girls was almost half-to-half, and most participants were under the age of fifteen as can be seen in Fig. 10.

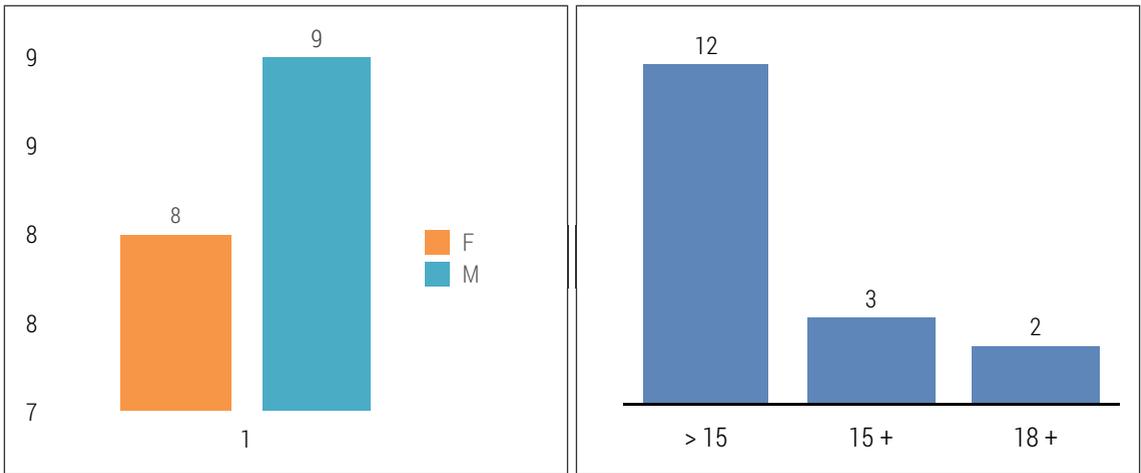
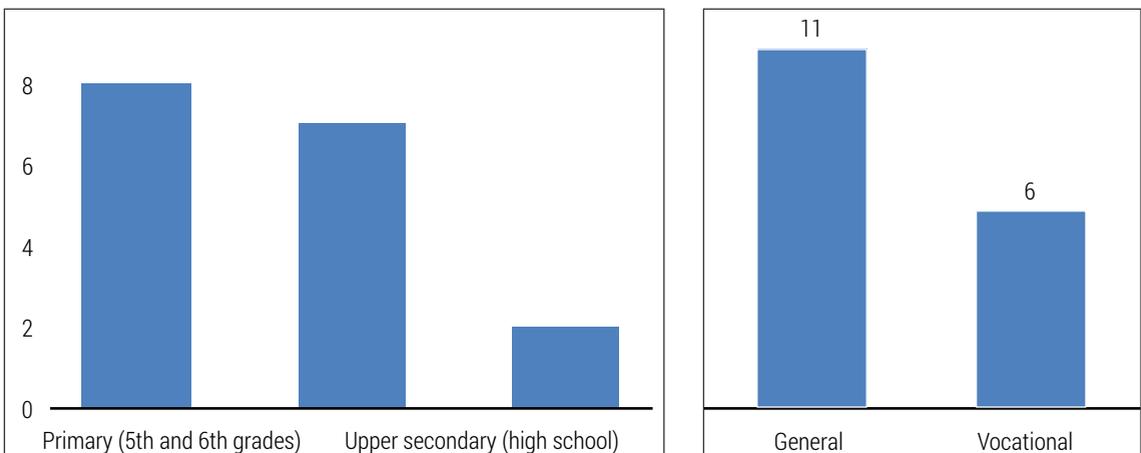
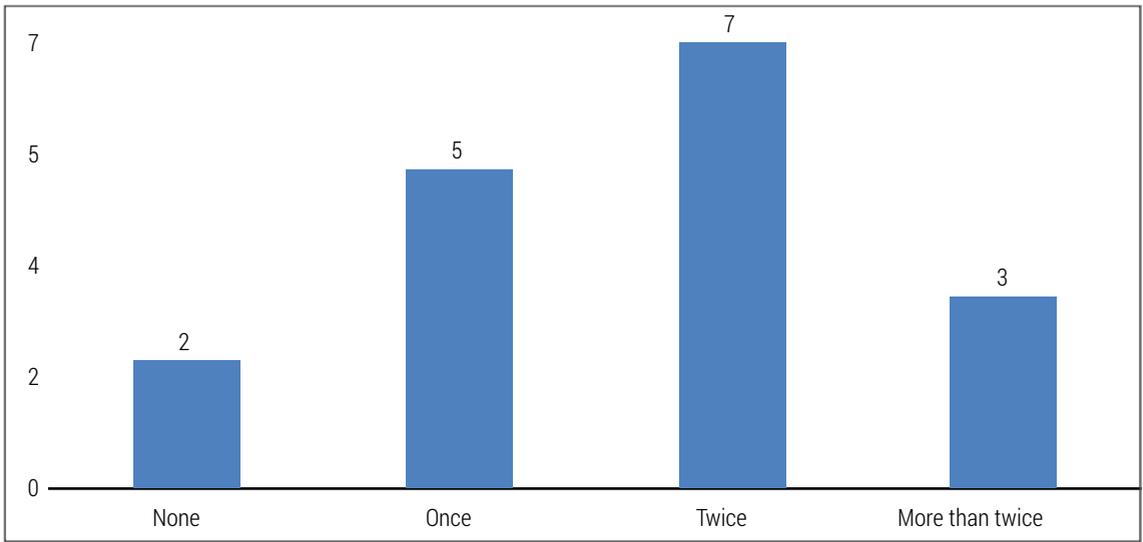


Fig. 10 – Young People's Gender And Age Distribution

The greatest diversity can be seen in terms of the young people's school situation. As we can see in Fig. 11, most young people who participated were either attending primary (5th to 6th grades) or lower secondary education (7th to 9th grades), while only two were in high school. Most young people were attending general/regular schooling, while only six were doing vocational/professional pathways (Fig. 12). Regarding their school trajectory in terms of success and failure, data in Fig. 13 shows that the vast majority had already repeated a grade at least once or twice.





Figs. 11, 12 And 13 – Young People's Current School Grade, Type Of Schooling And Number Of Grade Retentions So Far

In conclusion, we were dealing with a school population which had been particularly vulnerable to negative school effects during their life in relation with education. However, when the young people were asked about how they described themselves as students and how they felt about school learning, most answers demystified commonly held assumptions that social analysts and teachers might have regarding students with low school achievements. During the first mentoring sessions, for example, most students said things like “I like learning”, or “I’m interested in learning”, but they also felt like they could not learn in their current situations. Most admitted to having difficulties or lacking the ability to stay focused in class, as well as having behaviour problems related to this. Despite this, all of them recognized the importance of learning and being in school. This is of extreme importance when reflecting upon the results of the experimentation in Portugal and the way the young people participated in the project, as will be seen further on in the chapter. As one of the mentors and stakeholder said to the SAS team at the end of the experimentation, “we already knew the kids, and although it was deeply satisfying to see them in a different light, *we already knew they had something in them*. It just needed to be worked on, and I think we did it”.

Mentors

Overall, 31 mentors were involved in the project. All participated in the mentors’ training offered by one of the national stakeholder institutions – a non-formal and informal education

Portuguese association. Out of these, only 13 ended up taking part in the mentoring activities. The three who did not conclude the training claimed that it was because of lack of time. As for the 15 who left after the conclusion of the mentors' training, it was because the number of mentors per young person was adjusted according to what each stakeholder thought was necessary, taking into account the young people's specificities and whether the volunteering activity was an individual or group one. This led to having a mentors/volunteers ratio of about 2 young people per mentor.

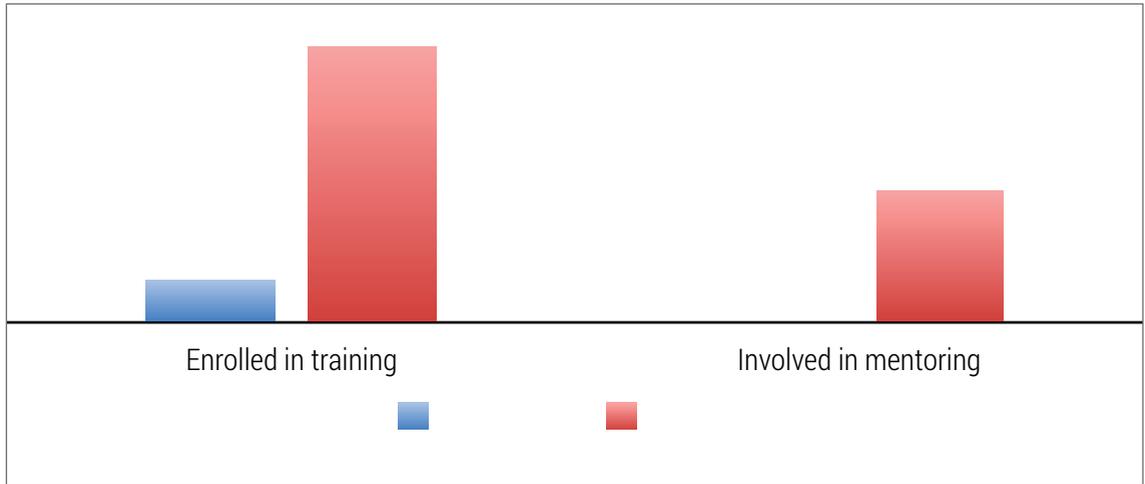


Fig. 14 – Ratio Of Enrollment And Participation Of Mentors In Portugal

With regard to mentors' gender, Fig. 14 shows that only four men took part in the training, but none took part in the actual mentoring during the experimentation. This is not peculiar of the situation in Portugal.

In terms of social profile, the mentors were educated at university level and worked in the educational field or developed intervention projects related to it. Their age varied. What is most important is that all the mentors participating in mentoring activities worked directly with or already knew their mentees from school or associative contexts. In the case of the IBISCO theatre (who later dropped out of the experimentation as was already mentioned) the mentors had been, at a time in their lives, school dropouts themselves. They had therefore a passionate motivation to be mentors to young people at risk, as well as having the capacity to empathise with the young people. The importance of involving this profile of mentors in the future will be further discussed in the last section of the chapter, "Lessons Learned".

PREPARING THE GROUND

Establishing contacts and building rapport

This section explains how the contacts with the stakeholders and young people were made and how they were maintained by building a rapport.

Local stakeholders

Personal contacts were made with the local associations and schools mentioned above, mostly due to previous academic research projects in the field. After local meetings and a national meeting, each stakeholder institution was assigned a coordinator who was in charge of the mentors' and young people's identification and initial approach. This relationship was strengthened during the mentors training which the coordinators from CIES attended.

Mentors recruitment and training

The initial 31 people enrolled in the mentors training were recruited by each stakeholder institution, which had their own selection criteria based on their particular social context, and what they thought were the needs of the young volunteers. In general, the attributes valued were:

- Being able to communicate and feel empathy towards the youngsters;
- Having a sense of responsibility;
- Being able to plan ahead and achieve goals;
- Ideally having previous experience in dealing with youngsters with this social and academic profile.

The Portuguese mentors' training was developed by the coordinating university-based team, ISCTE-IUL, and was delivered over two days for a total of 14 hours. The training was provided by the non-formal education organization Inducar, one of the national stakeholders. The training method favoured the mentors' own personal experiences with children and young people, as well as a resourceful combination of theoretical discussion, empirical data and ways of application of these sets of knowledge to the mentoring relationship. In total there were six sessions:

- Presentation of the participants
- School failure and dropout
- The learning process
- The mentoring process
- The practice of mentoring
- Next steps, evaluation and closing

Young people

The young people who participated in the experimentation were selected by our local stakeholders. They were selected mainly due to their learning difficulties and interest in being part of a volunteering experience. Around 45 young people were contacted: 30 through a group session and a chain email sent to several young people by “Moinho da Juventude”, and the remaining 15 in individual contact/invitation. From the first 30 youngsters, only 9 accepted to participate in the project, and only 6 out of those took on the volunteering activities until the end. All the young people individually contacted agreed to participate in the project and remained in the experimentation until the end, with the exception of 2 young boys who went abroad.

VOLUNTEERING AND MENTORING IN ACTION

Mentoring process

The meetings: contents and methodology

The mentoring strategies were, in all contexts, concerned primarily with the issue of school failure as a systemic reason for school dropouts. It was also of major importance that the youngsters did not feel as though these mentoring sessions were merely a reproduction of the teacher/student relationship. To avoid this, the mentors gave priority to establish a casual environment in the mentoring sessions so that the relationship with the mentees was as open and reflexive as possible.

This resulted in a flexible and personalized tailoring of the encounters, being simultaneously goal and process oriented: making sure to engage the young person in a step-by-step way of thinking without forgetting the global outcome of the activities, both for the institution

and for the volunteer. The criteria for choosing the issues to discuss in each encounter were the difficulties felt by the young people during the execution of the volunteering activities. Four general groups of issues tackled during mentoring were:

- Emotional
- Relational
- Instrumental
- School counselling

The emotional issues identified by the mentors concerned most of the youngsters, and consisted primarily on a sense of insecurity and lack of self-esteem. Many young people, for example, at the beginning of the volunteering experience saw themselves as being unable to move beyond a hardship and expressed several times their disappointment, wanting to give up the experimentation. The mentors had to find pedagogical and psychological tools for reducing their mentees stress and focus their energies on constructing alternatives. This was achieved mainly by helping the youngster build a solid sense of self-confidence that would last even in the absence of the mentor.

Since most of the volunteering activities were developed collectively, many youngsters also faced difficulties in dealing with group dynamics and solving conflicts, such as giving up their ideas in the face of disagreement and dealing calmly with mistakes from other young people. The mentors intervened by showing them possible negotiation strategies and exemplifying how important knowing how to work as a group is.

The technical problems related to the organization of the volunteering activities were obviously a major focus. Most of the preparations were made in the mentoring sessions – for instance, designing a Facebook page for the events, build the events' calendar and a personal agenda, etc. Many of the emotional and relational issues that troubled the young people manifested themselves through practical inabilities concerning the volunteering itself.

Finally, to make the necessary connection between the experimentation and the young person's relationship with school the mentors tried to direct their mentees enthusiasm and achievements towards their educational prospects. In the near future, namely next school year, what would they like to be doing? Would they rather strive to end high school in regular schooling and then go to college? Or do they think it makes more sense, given their areas of interest, to pursue a professional/vocational course and start working sooner? As

we will see further on, this counselling was successfully¹ achieved in more than one case.

The time distribution was approximately the following:

- Mentoring time: 13 hours
- Overall duration of the experimentation: 40 hours
- Number of mentoring sessions: 11

The relationship dynamics: challenges and mentoring strategies for overcoming the young people's insecurities

As was already mentioned, a fundamental strategy for the success of the mentoring activities was establishing mutual trust and respect as the basis for an egalitarian dynamic: the mentor could not be mistaken for a teacher. Instead, their role was to facilitate the young person's integration in the activities and serve as a facilitator for the youngster's expectations and achievements. The close and strong engagement of the young people in managing their volunteering experience autonomously was crucial. In doing so, the young people were engaged in choosing what was important to discuss with the mentor, acknowledging their biggest difficulties, assessing the immediate needs of the project they were developing. The mentors only guided and supported the reflecting process. What this does is that it empowers the young people by making them responsible for building their personal trajectory.

Nevertheless, mentors highlighted the initial absenteeism of some of the young people, their lack of motivation and scepticism about the relevance of the project for their school issues as the three biggest challenges in establishing a trusting and effective relationship with the young people. Additionally, they also identified the little amount of time dedicated to the mentoring in relation to the volunteering activities. This manifested itself mainly in the generalised indecision when choosing the volunteering activity. The mentors ended up having to suggest activities that were already occurring or scheduled to happen in the different settings of the experimentation, and it seems that as soon as this initial barrier was overcome the youth also overcame the confusion and the scepticism about the utility of the experimentation.

This is not to say the young people were suddenly self-confident and motivated, but they were receptive to give it a go in the majority of the cases. From this point on, the mentors began the psychological assessment of the young volunteers based on their performance

¹ The point of reference for evaluating the success of the experimentation was mainly the comparison between the young person's expectations and goals before and after the activities.

both during mentoring and the volunteer activities. These were the major problems faced by the mentors in their relationship with the mentees:

- Keeping the group motivated and cohesive
- Managing moments of tension between the volunteers
- Keeping the young person motivated and self-confident

It is not by chance that the major results achieved by the youth, according to the mentors, were relational and emotion-managing skills. In fact, the crises of lack of motivation were in many young people more frequent than not, as well as aggressive and individualistic reactions to unexpected problems that required a group effort and negotiation strategies. Some mentors dealt with this by increasing the number of individual meetings as opposed to group meetings, where the youth was encouraged to think more comfortably about what were the causes of their stress, and how to end it to complete a certain task: the mentors' strategies for managing emotional and relational problems focused therefore on presenting the young person's feelings to them on a new light, diverting the focus on negative feelings like anger towards constructive criticism of the sources of the stress and lack of motivation.

As for the young people, they all recognized some value for the encounters aside from the obvious role in preparing the volunteering activities. In describing the utility of the mentoring in their experience, they used expressions like "to help us", "they motivated me to learn and to participate in the volunteering activities", "sense of responsibility", "self-confidence and self-esteem", "to clear doubts and give ideas and opinions about the activities" and "to say how I was feeling".

Volunteering activities

Volunteering: youth in action

We have already begun to see how demonstrative volunteering can impact on the young people's insecurities about themselves, when allied with a scrupulous mentoring, and how this self-doubt stems mostly from a negative school experience marked by failure and a lack of institutional recognition of their capabilities. In Portugal, eight different volunteering activities were developed in six different institutional contexts:

- Organizing and setting in motion a two-week holiday camp for other young people in Damaia's school;

- Organizing a talent show in Odivelas' school;
- Childcare support in the Odivelas Parish's nursery;
- Support in Odivelas' veterinarian clinic;
- Reception support in Alto da Cova da Moura's job seeking office;
- Stage maintenance and artist support in a youth dedicated four-day festival in Alto da Cova da Moura;
- Childcare support in Alto da Cova da Moura's association "Moinho da Juventude";
- Childcare support in a month-long holiday camp organized by Alto da Cova da Moura's association "Moinho da Juventude".

It is important to stress that the young people chose only four of these activities. The school activities, as well as childcare support in a holiday camp, and support in a job seeking office were suggested by the mentors in the absence of an enthusiastic attitude by their mentees at the beginning of the volunteering. Since the young people had no idea of what they would like to do, therefore the mentors suggested activities that were already predicted to happen and added a volunteering component to them. On the contrary, the contacts established with the parish nursery and the veterinarian clinic were completely new and chosen by the two volunteers, who took the initiative to suggest it to the mentors who then established contacts with the institutions. Similar was the case of the two young people who volunteered in a month-long holiday camp and in a four day youth festival: they did not directly choose those activities, but mentioned childcare and culture as their areas of interest for volunteering, so the mentors suggested those options due to geographic proximity to the youth's homes.

We identified four major groups of tasks performed and skills acquired by the young people during the volunteering activities:

- **Organizational and event management:** involved event scheduling, preparing materials, dividing and sharing tasks, and improvising alternative methods in the face of hardships.
- **Communication:** these were cross-cutting to all the other tasks and consisted of many platforms such as face-to-face (the day-to-day interactions) and virtual (creating and managing a Facebook page or event, for instance), but also raised the

problem of the clash between differentiated linguistic codes, which are different in professional contexts than in the contexts young people are used to.

- **Childcare:** either in the context of holiday camps or in the nursery, the young people whose main task consisted of watching and entertaining children and/or babies developed several important skills, being the most relevant ones a sense of responsibility towards another person's well-being, and an ability to appear as both an authority figure to the children, which they should respect, and as someone they could trust – interestingly enough, this was the same type of relationship intended between mentors and mentees in the SAS project.
- **User support:** this involved important communication and computer software skills, as well as an ability to redirect the service user or the person in need of help to the appropriate source.

Assessing the impact of volunteering on the young people: expectations, outcomes and satisfaction

In total, 20 young people participated in volunteering and mentoring activities in Portugal. In the table below, we can see in detail what were each young person's expectations and reflections about their volunteering experience.

Activities developed	What they expected from the experience	Level of satisfaction	What was best	What was worst	Did they choose the activity they developed?	
1	Having fun	Very satisfied	The games	Conflicts	No	
2	Having fun	Very satisfied	The sports tournaments	Waking up early	No	
3	Organizing a two-week holiday camp for other young people	Having fun	Socializing	The traditional games	No	
4		Gaining experience	Somewhat Satisfied	The sports tournaments	The traditional games	No
5		-	Very satisfied	The sports tournaments	Waking up early	No
6		-	Somewhat satisfied	All the activities	The children were disobedient towards the volunteers	No

	Activities developed	What they expected from the experience	Level of satisfaction	What was best	What was worst	Did they choose the activity they developed?
7		Being valued in school	Somewhat satisfied	Not going to the classes and being valued in school	The institution changed some rules without consulting the volunteers	No
8	Organizing a talent show	Being valued in school	Somewhat satisfied	Not going to the classes and being valued in school	Not having my ideas being respected all the time	No
9		Being valued in school	Somewhat satisfied	Not going to the classes and being valued in school	Having to give up some ideas for someone else's	No
10	Childcare support in a nursery	Contacting with children	Very satisfied	Meeting new people and helping with the babies	Having to work daily during vacation period	Yes
11	Support in a veterinarian clinic	-	Very satisfied	-	-	Yes
12	Stage maintenance and artist support at youth festival	Acquire useful knowledge about cultural events management	Very satisfied	Acquiring new knowledge in cultural events management	Some people's lack of commitment to deadlines	Yes
13	Stage maintenance at youth festival and animator at elders association	Developing good relationships with people	Very satisfied	Taking walks with the elders and gaining new musical knowledge	Delays in the schedule	Yes
14	School support to children in local association	To help others and learn what she wants to do in the future	Very satisfied	To confide with my mentor about how I was feeling	Nothing	No

	Activities developed	What they expected from the experience	Level of satisfaction	What was best	What was worst	Did they choose the activity they developed?
15	Childcare at local association's infantry	Learn to deal with people	Very satisfied	Playing games and learning new words in English	Nothing	No
16		To have fun	Very satisfied	Playing with children	Nothing	No
17		To have fun	Very satisfied	Helping with the children	Some ill-mannered children	No
18	Client support in the local job seeking office	Learn to deal with people	Very satisfied	Being able to help finding jobs for people	Nothing	No
19		-	-	-	-	No
20		-	-	-	-	No

Table 1 – Expectations and outcomes of the experience for the young people

To conclude, we believe it is relevant to point out a few noteworthy outcomes:

- The variety of activities developed was great: nine different types of volunteering were done by the young people, which shows a real effort by both mentors and stakeholder institutions to adapt the activities to each young person's interest.
- The large majority of the young people (71%) felt "very satisfied" with the experience in the SAS project. The remaining (only five of the young people) felt "somewhat satisfied", due to issues of relational nature such as being unable to deal with interpersonal conflicts, perceived lack of organization by the stakeholder institutions and difficulties in relating to the volunteering beneficiaries (namely the children).

Choosing their volunteering activity does not seem to be a determining factor for the general level of satisfaction of the young people. What seemed to matter most was the content of the relationship mentor-mentee, particularly the perceived mutual respect between them. The mentor's continuing dialoguing and availability to support the young person, not as someone who "knows it all" but as a communicative partner working towards the same goals and suffering through the same hardships as the young person, was the determinant factor for the satisfaction with the experience, as well as the activities developed being in

their area of interest despite not having been chosen by them.

Fig. 15 shows that the activities were the most enjoyed aspect, followed by the social interactions in the context of volunteering. Some young people felt valued as people, especially the ones that developed the volunteering activities in their school context. Feeling like they were of help to other people was also a major reason for having enjoyed the experimentation. Learning new things was relevant for the young people who participated in the youth festival, since it is directly related to what they want to do professionally (working in cinema and multimedia). Finally, one young person talked about her mentor as being the best part of the experience, because they were able to talk openly.

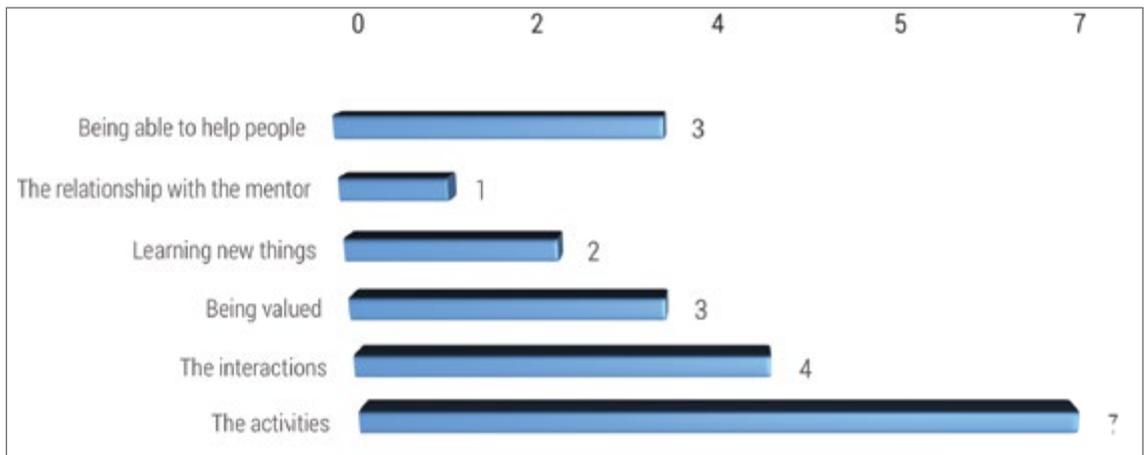


Fig. 15 - Most Enjoyed Aspects Of The Experimentation By The Young People

LESSONS LEARNT

Achievements

The impact of the experimentation was felt at two different levels: with the youngsters and with the stakeholder institutions. In the first case, although it was not possible to quantify the impact as attainment, there was a noticeable impact at four levels:

- i) Young people's ability to define the next steps of their school life and aspirations, such as enrolling in professional courses;
- ii) Professional skills – such as, event management, networking and communication skills, childcare and customer routing;

- iii) Personal and relational skills – such as, sense of responsibility, and self-management; and,
- iv) Study skills – such as, using dictionaries or online resources developed either through the volunteering or the homework support activities. As a result, their attitudes towards school have improved significantly.

The institutional impact of the project was also significant. It is relevant to stress the openness of schools, associations and the municipality involved in the project to volunteering and mentoring as a pedagogical approach to school success. Two aspects proved particularly impactful:

- The continuity of the project's methodologies in all major stakeholder contexts: Damaia's school will maintain volunteering activities as a practice in the current school year, and the association "Moinho da Juventude" will reinforce their volunteering modalities with mentoring.
- The mentors went through an effective role change: for teachers and association workers, this change was less disrupting with their day-to-day approach than it was for school cultural mediators, who felt like they had to return to a "one-to-one" relationship.

Challenges

Some difficulties were found along the way, namely, the lack of time of the people involved, the scepticism felt by the youngsters about the relevance of the project for their school issues, the difficulty felt by the youngsters in choosing the type of volunteering they would like to do, and also the coordinator team's dependency on the good will of the local stakeholders, sharing our authority as project coordinators in favour of the local network of voluntary participants.

Future practice

The three major lessons learnt through the project's application in Portugal were:

- *The importance of an already existing relationship between mentors and the young people: the familiarity between mentors and mentees was crucial for developing a degree of mutual trust in such a short amount of time, and did not reinforce negative stereotypes in contrary to what could have been predicted. We have also found how*

positive it was to be able to involve people in mentors' training with a past school trajectory similar to the young volunteers: having been through school failure and early school leaving, they brought a fresh look into the project and were able to empathize with the young people in ways other adults couldn't. They are a target group to look for in future applications of the project's methodology.

- The importance of allowing the young person as much autonomy in the choices made as possible: this applies not only to the choice of volunteering activities, but also to all the processes related to the organization and realization of these. The young people must be encouraged to think for themselves and make their own choices, in which the role of the mentor must be to facilitate reflection about the outcomes of different possibilities. Making mistakes and overcoming them is also a fundamental step in the young people's self-understanding and relation to school.
- The importance of connecting the volunteering activities with school learning: given some interesting results already discussed above where the young people who realised volunteering in their school felt like they were valued, it is our recommendation that in future practice at least one part of the activities is done in a school context (e.g.: the volunteering itself, an exhibition prepared by the young people about the volunteering they did, or even a ceremony for delivering diplomas of participation, etc.).

The project's prototype has potential to be replicated, if the role and the availability of the coordinating team is reinforced by increasing their direct participation in the project's experimentation, guaranteeing its sustainability. It is a priority to enforce the school leaderships' awareness for the importance of attributing official school benefits to the voluntary activities as a strategy for success.

It is also important to reflect on the reasons that conditioned the participation in the project, both of mentors, stakeholders and young people. Since most of the dropouts were due to lack of time, resources and mobility capability, it should be considered in future projects to have financial aid predicted to help those who can't reach the volunteering locations by their own means; young people in difficult socioeconomic situations who can't afford a transportation pass, for instance.

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ANNEXES

Since most literature on the subject of school failure and dropout mentions the parents socioeconomic background as one of the most determining factors for the student's relationship with school, we think it is relevant to portrait the social reality from which our young people come from. Indeed, the data collected shows that most of them come from families in which both parents have low educational resources, as well as low status and low income jobs (Figs. i and ii).

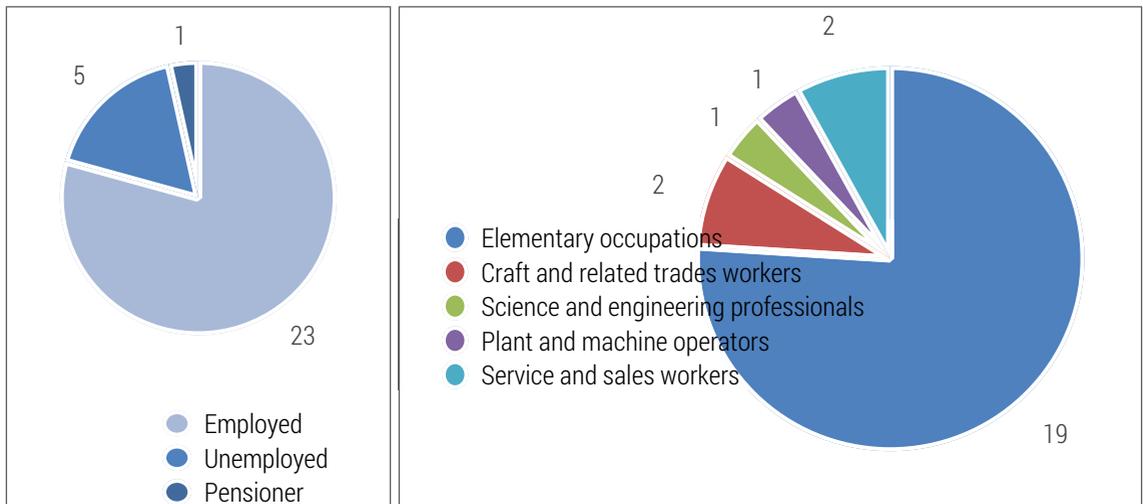


Fig. I - Young People's Parents' Professional Group (Isco)

Fig. II - Young People's Parents' Professional Situation

Despite only five parents being unemployed, nineteen out of twenty-five have elementary occupations – in which are included professions that require low skill sets and low income levels, such as stonemasons, construction workers, cleaning jobs, etc.

Regarding parents' educational levels, we can see a greater diversity (Fig. iii). Most have either pre-primary or primary level education

CHAPTER 13:

National Case Study: Bulgaria

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1. GENERAL CONTEXT OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING (ESL) IN BULGARIA WITH REGARD TO REFUGEES

This chapter outlines the implementation of the “Success at School” (SAS) project in Bulgaria. To this aim, the first part addresses the phenomenon of early school leaving in Bulgaria, presents the reasons for the choice of the selected target group, and, last but not least, describes the institutional context, characterizing the situation of the target group. The second part of the chapter traces the details around the project implementation in Bulgaria: in particular, the selection and training process of the group of mentors and the subsequent work with refugee children and youth. The chapter ends with a brief overview of the challenges encountered in the process of the project implementation, as well as some ideas for overcoming them.

This first part of the chapter presents the overall picture of early school leaving in Bulgaria, the reasons and the characteristics thereof. Apart from the general context, the chapter outlines the specifics of the selected target group, with whom the experimentation was carried out. It describes the particular institutional context, that is, the capacity of the implementing organization, the profile of the partners and the key stakeholders.

1.1. Early school leaving in Bulgaria

The “Success at School” project provides an innovative tool to combat the phenomenon of early school leaving (ESL) in the European Union through a combination of mentoring and volunteering. Bulgaria, as a member of the EU and in the spirit of the “Europe 2020” EU Strategy, is committed to work in the field of prevention of early school leaving and school drop-out. According to the Bulgarian Strategy for the Prevention of School Drop-out and Early School Leaving (2013-2020), the proportion of drop-outs in 2012 was 12.7%. Pursuant to the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union (2011/ C 191/01 of 28/06/2011) the aim of Bulgaria is to reduce this percentage to 11% by 2020.

Although the reasons for dropping out are believed to be ethno-cultural, economic, social, educational and institutional, the strategy implies that it is insufficient knowledge of the Bulgarian language at an early age, which is a main factor for the subsequent drop-out from the educational system (Strategy, 2013, p. 8). With regard to the fact that the percentage of foreigners living in Bulgaria is less than 1% (Eurostat, 2013), it is not surprising that the main profile of early school leavers in Bulgaria encompasses children from ethnic minorities, especially the Roma, and to a lesser extent, children of Turkish descent. As a result, the policies for prevention of early school leaving primarily address representatives of ethnic minorities.

However, this focus on ethnic minorities leaves one category of vulnerable children excluded from the policies for prevention of ESL: refugee children. This creates the need for specialized activities aimed at this particular group. For this reason, in addition to the existing educational policies, the Bulgarian “Success at School” team decided to fill in the existing gap and to therefore to use volunteering and mentoring for the prevention of drop-out with refugee children.

1.2. Reasons for focusing on refugee youth

After signing the Geneva Convention in 1993, Bulgaria joined the family of countries granting asylum, thus assuming its international responsibilities in this respect. According to the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) around 34,000 people have applied for asylum in the country in the past 21 years. Among them the highest number of applications came from citizens of Syria, followed by those of Afghanistan, Iraq and Armenia. During this period the average number of submitted applications rarely exceeded 2000 per year. This state of affairs saw a dramatic change in 2013 due to the escalation of the conflict in Syria. Bulgaria, which since 2007 is an external border of the EU, faced an unprecedented situation to deal with as the number of asylum applications reached 7000, more than half

of them from Syrian citizens, followed by citizens of Afghanistan

As a result of the unprecedented peak in asylum applications, those arriving in the country were confronted with a situation of institutional collapse, political and media ostracism and growing social tensions (Staykova, 2013). In this context one of the most vulnerable groups are children. Access to education comes along with all other fundamental rights (UNCRC, 1989). Active involvement of refugees in various forms and levels of education is a guarantee for their successful adaptation and integration into the host country.

Against the backdrop of all the emerging problems that the state and society had to deal with in the initial stage of the refugee crisis, the inclusion of refugee children and youth in the educational system seemed left outside of priorities and away from the public eye. This observation is confirmed by data showing that about 2,000 children with refugee or humanitarian status have missed at least one academic year (Sega newspaper, 2/09/2014). According to data from the Bulgarian Red Cross, only about 50 children granted international protection attended school in 2013. At present, the number of asylum seeking and refugee children enrolled at schools across the country in the year 2014/2015 is 97, the biggest number being registered in Sofia: 83 children.

The problems with the inclusion of refugee children and youth in the education system are multi-faceted and require a comprehensive approach. However, the following areas could be highlighted as main factors for the emergence of the various challenges faced by refugee children in their access to school:

- *Lack of adequate management and relevant procedural decisions* – at this stage the procedure for enrolment of refugee children in schools is carried out in accordance with an Ordinance from 2000, which in turn is based on a repealed article from the Law for Asylum and Refugees. It states that, upon a successful completion of a Bulgarian language course, refugee children have to pass an examination at the Regional Inspectorate of Education, which is to determine the level of their knowledge, identify the grade which corresponds to their level and enrol them in a Bulgarian school. The described procedure is in practice cumbersome and inefficient. For example, since July 2014, the foreseen Bulgarian language classes, which pursuant to the Ordinance should be provided by SAR following a curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, are being provided by Caritas, an NGO, and are being financed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in all accommodation centres of the Agency. Currently, the Agency does not provide Bulgarian language classes.
- *Cases of social tension* – the unprecedented situation, the lack of information, the

institutional collapse, and the politicization of the crisis all led to cases of increased social tensions in some locations. Although sporadic, there were cases in which local communities were mobilized not to accept the arrival of asylum seekers in their towns and villages. Unfortunately, there was a similar case with a group of refugee children enrolled in the local school of a small village, where the local population refused to allow the refugee children to study in the same class as their children.

- *Perception of Bulgaria as a transit country* – a large number of asylum seekers in Bulgaria intend to continue their flight towards the heart of Europe. Many of those who perceive the country as a transit point, do not see the point of sending their children to school in Bulgaria for a short period of time only, and focus their efforts on preparing their departure. This perception of the situation is even more disturbing than all the above mentioned reasons for the limited participation of refugee children in the educational system in Bulgaria because it is based on myths and false expectations. This is the case, firstly, because the Dublin Regulation (EU, 2014) stipulates that the responsibility for processing the asylum claim lies with the first country of asylum in the EU. Secondly, because the length of the refugee determination procedure often last more than a few months, contrary to the expectations of the candidates for international protection.
- *Unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee minors* – they are an extremely vulnerable group, for whom the country of asylum is obliged to provide special reception and procedural guarantees to ensure that their best interests are met. Unfortunately, the procedures addressing the provision of care for these children also fall into the cracks because of the lack of adequate management and relevant procedural decisions.
- Valuable information about the best practices for educational integration of refugee children in all European countries can be found in a comparative study of Anna Krasteva (2013).

1.3. Institutional Context

The focus on refugee children entails some considerations regarding the practical implementation of mentoring and the volunteering activities, that is, to a large extent the refugee children are located in the accommodation centres of the State Agency for Refugees. As of November 2014, the number of these centres across the country is six, and three of them are located in Sofia. The highest number of children, 190 as of mid-October 2014, is accommodated in the registration and reception centre in the “Ovcha kupel” district, with a total capacity of 860 beds. The centre avails itself of an integration department where social workers organize special art workshops and other arts and crafts

activities with the help of volunteers from various NGOs.

The access to the registration and reception centre is limited for outsiders. Access can be granted upon the approval of the Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees. To this end, the CERMES team signed a bi-lateral cooperation agreement with the Agency for the period of the project experimentation. Once the formal access was granted, the team identified the social workers working with the refugee children, with a view to building a rapport between the children and the mentors who would be working with them for the period of the project. By involving the main employees working with refugee children in the project as mentors, the team could guarantee the effectiveness of the approach by:

- Ensuring physical access to the target group;
- Facilitating the establishment of a relationship based on mutual trust through the mediation of a person familiar to the children;
- Focusing on children outside of the educational system or at risk of school drop-out;
- Providing information on the situation of the children participating in the project, their impressions and feedback;
- Legitimizing the project activities through ensuring the support of the State Agency for Refugees.

The proximity between the New Bulgarian University and the Accommodation Centre in the “Ovcha kupel” district also facilitated the access to the university premises for the participating refugee children. New Bulgarian University, and CERMES in particular, regularly organize activities to address the refugee situation in the country. The relevant previous experiences of the institution could also be considered a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the project methodology aiming at the prevention of school drop-out within the SAS project.

Any attempts to prevent school drop-out require a comprehensive approach, involving the efforts of more than two institutions. In order to guarantee the greatest impact various NGOs working with refugees and/or volunteers were identified and involved in the experimentation phase of the SAS project. Some of the organizations that took an active part in the project activities were CVS-Bulgaria, the Free Syria Association, representatives of the civic initiative “Friends of Refugees”, the Bulgarian Red Cross, UNHCR, the “Hope for Us” Association and many others. In addition to the participating NGO representatives, many refugees, migration researchers and academics, various sports trainers, dance

instructors and artists and craftsmen became part of the project in their personal capacity. All partners who took part in the mentor training sessions and in the activities for refugee children did so on a voluntary basis. This devotion strengthened the project spirit and served as a role model and a basis for motivation for all the mentors and refugee children throughout the experimentation phase.

2. THE PROJECT IN PRACTICE: ORGANIZATION OF THE PROCESS AND EXPERIMENTATION

This section of the chapter outlines the practical aspects of the project implementation in the Bulgarian context. It represents the organizational processes including the development and running of the mentor training sessions; the work with refugee children and youth; the concrete outcomes of the activities; and, the challenges and their solutions throughout the experimentation phase of the project.

2.1. Selection of Mentors and Mentor Training

Mentoring, together with volunteering, was a key part of the success of pedagogical intervention of the Success at School project. The knowledge of and involvement in volunteering, i.e. the motivation to undertake voluntary activities, do not come naturally, especially in situations of children whose lives are characterized by difficult socio-economical circumstances. This is the reason why mentors were of primary importance to the success of the project as they helped monitoring progress, work with and motivate the children who took part in the volunteering training and activities.

Because of the importance of mentors, their selection and preparation were crucial components of the intervention. The CERMES team applied a complex system for the recruitment of those interested to become mentors. First, a public announcement for mentors was prepared. It included information on the contents and the scope of the project, as well as the requirements for the potential mentors and their future responsibilities. Second, the team identified individuals who were experts in working with refugee children, inviting them to become mentors. In this way, the CERMES team, refugees, researchers, volunteers and social workers were included in the project as mentors.

Thirty-one students, interns and current volunteers in a refugee project at the State Agency for Refugees responded to the announcement, expressing their willingness to participate in the SAS project. They filled in individual questionnaires, providing information on their

previous volunteering experience, outlined their expectations from their participation in the project and explained their motivation to participate. Most of them did not have experience in volunteering, or in mentoring. However, they were highly motivated to participate in the project due to their desire to:

- Be of benefit to the refugee children in facilitating their access to education;
- Learn more about the refugee situation in the country;
- Gain experience in the area of mentoring;
- Develop new or enhance existing social and multicultural skills;
- Receive a certificate for participation in a European project.

The two-faceted strategy applied by the Bulgarian team can be considered a good practice in the mentor selection because it managed to ensure a varied group of mentors in terms of their interests and expertise, which guaranteed the possibility to share experiences between the less and more experienced mentors. This approach stimulated the horizontal organization of the interaction among the participants, in which the hierarchical differences (academics and students) can become a source of knowledge and motivation for all to keep up a high level of professionalism in an entertaining and pleasurable way.

All mentors participated in three training sessions. The content of the training included an introduction to the project, its aims and objectives; a sense of what activities the project might be involved with; an introduction to volunteering and mentoring. In addition, there was a separate topic on building rapport between mentors and children at risk of school drop-out. The contents of the training sessions were presented both by experienced mentors, part of the CERMES team, and by special guest-trainers invited for the session. The special guests included Ms. Yulia Yordanova, a founder and member of the steering board of CVS-Bulgaria, as well as Mr. Vasil Dimitrov, a social worker with vast experience with early school leavers, mainly of Roma origin. The methods applied included presentations and interactive activities.

After the first training session, which was evaluated as to be of great benefit and interest, the mentors expressed their wish for a second training session to be conducted before their first meeting with the refugee children. In view of their stated needs, additional learning modules with practical orientation were identified. The second training session took place immediately prior to the first meeting with the refugee children. The main topics covered by the training were working with refugees, the refugee context in the country and

the ethical principles for working with children and refugee children in particular.

The third and last training session for mentors was conducted before the second meeting with refugee children. It introduced a number of additional topics of importance to the SAS project, such as inter-cultural dialogue and active citizenship. Various examples of activities illustrating the two principles were presented and discussed in small groups. As a result, the benefits from participating in activities related to the two concepts were outlined.

An important aspect of the mentor preparation was their opportunity to participate timely in the organization of the activities for refugee children. Flexibility was a fundamental principle not only for the project implementation in Bulgaria, but also for its success, because it generated the following benefits:

- Adaptation to the skills of the mentors and the needs of the refugee children;
- Instilling a feeling of authorship among the mentors;
- Legitimizing the project in the eyes of the participants, both mentors and volunteers;
- Reaffirming the underlying principle of the project “learning by doing” in contrast with following a rigid theoretical model.

Every training session lasted for half a day and all the mentors were invited to take part in it. Not all of them managed to participate in all of the training sessions though, due to various reasons. Therefore, it was considered important to establish a platform for compiling an archive of the written materials presented and used during the training sessions, so that all interested parties could resort to them in case of need at all times.

2.2. Mentor-mentee matching

As noted, mentoring is a process requiring a long-lasting engagement of the mentor with regard to the person of his/her concern. Therefore, the mentor-mentee matching is of crucial significance to the character of the subsequent relationship, which should be based on mutual choice and interest. Since mentoring should be established on the basis of the acceptance of a role model and trust, both of which could barely be internalized in a forced manner, such an approach is an additional factor for the success of the initiative,

The matching between the mentors and the refugee children took place in a natural setting

during the first experimentation session. The children were grouped around a number of mentors. The first meeting served as an opportunity for the familiarization process and the establishment of long-term interest in specific persons/topics. The principle of flexibility was a core element in this phase of the project implementation too. As such, this initial grouping process was not considered fixed. It was rather a step towards the formation of pairs and groups of three mentors and volunteers, a process, which continued during the following activities.

2.3. Implementation, results and satisfaction of the experimentation

Within the SAS project, the experimentation meant 'the organization of events devoted to volunteering where meetings between mentors and refugee children take place'. In Bulgaria the experimentation phase consisted of five events for refugee children, at which various activities related to science, inter-cultural games, team initiatives, arts and crafts workshops took place. As a matter of principle, all of the activities were socialization activities, which enhanced not only the willingness of the children to return to the classroom, but also their Bulgarian language skills, which are, as already noted, one of the main factors for school drop-out, and in the case of refugee children for their access to the educational system in general.

The first experimentation event took place a month after the first mentor training. Each following event was organized at an interval of about two weeks, interrupted by a long summer vacation (July-August) and then continued with the same frequency until mid-October 2014. To mark the beginning of the experimentation process, an external event was organized for 13 refugee children aged 7 to 19, accompanied by 12 mentors. The group was taken to the Sofia Science Festival by organized transport. At the event the participants had the opportunity to delve in the depths of physics and chemistry together with an Egyptian chemist, invited to the experimentation meeting by the CERMES team, who managed to translate and convey in a child-friendly manner the incomprehensible and unfamiliar language of science. This event was meant to facilitate the familiarization process between the mentors and the refugee children, so that rapport could be established and serve as the basis for the subsequent project events (see Mentor-Mentee Matching). The project was presented during this first event. In addition, further topics of interest to the refugee children were discussed with the aim to offer initiatives corresponding to the needs of the target group. It was established that the children were interested in activities related to crafts, drawing, dancing, sports and other group physical activities (e.g. painting).

Based on the information collected during the first event, the second meeting with refugee children was organized. It took place in various rooms of the New Bulgarian University and

was attended by a higher number of participants: 19 refugee children in the same age range and 11 mentors. The popularity of the project activities was rapidly growing among the refugee children. They deemed their participation in the project useful because it implied meetings with persons (the mentors), who supported them and bestowed to them the necessary individual attention, which they strongly needed at school, but were deprived of due to the institutional constraints characterizing the Bulgarian school system. In addition, children felt it important to be part of a group, to socialize and be active. In line with these identified needs, the second event focused on team activities and involved: various board games such as chess, ludo, dominoes, a soap workshop under the guidance of one of the most active mentors, and a boxing class delivered by a female trainer, among others. The second event developed the educational and professional aspects of volunteering through the incorporation of practical activities, leading to building up skills and the interest in getting to know new competences and crafts.

Three more events took place after the end of the summer vacation. Two of these were devoted to drawing. During the drawing workshops the refugee children stepped into the shoes of authors and volunteers for the composition of an exhibition of their paintings dedicated to school and their attitude towards it. Eleven mentors took part in these events, which included an even larger number of refugee children, most of them participating for the first time due to their recent arrival in Bulgaria, after the beginning of the SAS project.

The last event took place during the SAS week, which was organized in all partners' countries to raise awareness of the project and disseminate it widely. The final event consisted of many closing activities such as a project evaluation, activities for refugee children, the opening of the exhibition, and handing out certificates to the most active and regularly attending mentors (11 in total), and to the other mentors and participants in the project activities and the representatives of NGOs and state institutions, who followed and/or participated in the implementation of the project methodology for prevention of school drop-out throughout the whole period of the project. This event was attended by 32 refugee children, for whom a dance workshop was organized. A specially invited dance instructor engaged the children in a zumba class, followed by a freestyle part where the refugee children took the initiative to show their folklore dances and to learn Bulgarian traditional dances.

A continuously present element of all the events for mentors and refugee children was the emphasis on inter-culturality, volunteering, the unity in diversity and the importance of civic initiatives. A great advantage of the project activities was the possibility to enhance the principle of "learning by doing". The education in volunteering, itself being a practical activity, could be best delivered by the involvement in such practical activities which had the added benefit of promoting diversity and inclusion.

3. Challenges and Recommendations for Overcoming Them

As with every project, despite the efficient planning, in the course of the project implementation a number of challenges relating to the effectiveness of the project methodology were identified. The latter should be taken into consideration in the further replication of the project tools.

- *Language barrier* – the choice of refugee children as a target group of the project activities implied from its very beginning a need to provide sufficient interpreters for the delivery of the project activities. About ten out of the 49 children who took part in the project were enrolled at school. Therefore their level of Bulgarian language knowledge was very high in comparison to the level of their peers, who were excluded from the educational system. However, it was not considered high enough for these children to interpret for their peers during the various project events. As a result, the team developed a strategy to identify mentors who had a good command of the languages spoken by the refugee children (such as Arabic and Farsi), and who could provide basic interpretation during the events without ruling out the communication in Bulgarian language, which stimulated the children to develop their Bulgarian language skills.
- *Age* – the target group of the project included youngsters between 14 and 19 years of age, who could have not only the physical but also the legal right to be admitted as volunteers in various NGOs. The experimentation process in Bulgaria involved children at a younger age (7-19 years old). Their participation was determined by their strong willingness to participate. The rejection of younger children to become part of the project activities would mean the separation of younger from older brothers and sisters and the inculcation of a feeling of insufficient value for reasons, which could be interpreted in a wrong way, leading to the further traumatising of these children.
- *Mobility* – due to the perception by many of the beneficiaries of international protection of Bulgaria as a transit country on the way to ‘Europe’, refugee families are characterized with high mobility rates. Every couple of months new refugee waves replace the earlier ones who have left Bulgaria. This rapid mobility is a challenge to the effectiveness of the project activities, because they have been devised as a series of inter-related events, unfolding over a longer period of time for a longer-lasting effect. However, the change in participants leads to the impossibility to participate in the cycle of envisaged events and therefore to ‘missing’ part of the study material. This phenomenon is a challenge not only for the project, but for the whole educational system in Bulgaria, which has to date not experienced the need to encompass a hyper-mobile group, such as refugee children. Due to the dynamic

context, the strategy of the team was to provide the possibility for participation to all who wanted to be part of the project activities, with the idea of inclusion and integration of the latter in the existing teams, which could compensate for the negative effects of changing team members.

The lessons learnt during the implementation of the project are many. Below is a list of some of them:

- *Gaining access to young people and working with stakeholders* - Our experience shows that it is best to seek the approval of a state institution, responsible for the provision of care for the target group, in order to ensure access to the latter. The identification not only of an institution, but mostly of a trusted person who is a representative of this institution is of primary importance to the initial phase of building trust between the team and the children. All relevant previous experience in work with the target group and/or individuals and networks in the area of interest is an advantage. If there is no such experience, the identification of additional NGOs, working with the target group, would be beneficial in view of securing their potential involvement and the introduction of their experience and expertise in the project activities.
- *Recruitment and training of mentors* - A good practice for the establishment of a balanced team of mentors is applying a two-faceted selection strategy, aimed at ensuring the participation of both experienced and less experienced mentors. This approach is characterized with the identification of specialists who would be willing to share their expertise with young, motivated, active and innovative mentors. In view of bolstering the team spirit, it is important to ensure a possibility for equal participation of all mentors in the activity planning process. The flexibility of both the contents of the training sessions and of the volunteering activities for the children at risk of school drop-out is of primary importance to the success of the project. Another identified good practice is the provision of training sessions prior to the carrying out of the practical experimentation activities. Such an approach ensures the timely application of the theoretical information in practice.
- *Matching of mentors and mentees* – The matching process should be preceded by a stage of mutual familiarization and a possibility for a change of mentor in case of no interest and trust in the latter.
- *Organising the volunteering activities: 'learning by doing'* - The early identification of activities of interest to the students at risk of school drop-out is of primary importance to the success of the project and to the motivation of the students to participate in voluntary initiatives. This motivation could be promoted in the form of

interactive and practical activities which allow for the deployment of initiatives by both mentors and future volunteers. It is important to provide space for the children to become authors, to create and to be actively supported during all events. The matching between one mentor and two-three mentees is a successful formula for the provision of individual care for all children: it is a socialization element for the children, which is often absent in the formal educational institutions. In addition, the focus on teamwork is the basis for the establishment of professional and educational skills in the future development of the target group.

Conclusion

The SAS experimentation in Bulgaria received very positive evaluation both from the participants in the project activities, represented by the mentors and the refugee children, and by the stakeholders, including the State Agency for Refugees and the various NGOs which had the opportunity to become part of the project. Due to the age of the participants, the experimentation process did not result in their inclusion in organized/formal voluntary initiatives. However, it opened the doors to the youth for their participation in future such activities in the territory of Bulgaria or any other host country along their way.

The CERMES team hopes that our experience in motivating children and youth at risk of school drop-out to develop knowledge and skills through volunteering, with the invaluable support of mentors, will be beneficial to the organization of activities of interest to the target group in multiple contexts by different NGOs or state institutions, schools, community centres, etc. Not only our positive experience, but also the challenges faced and the lessons learnt could be applied for ensuring the well-being of children of various ethno-cultural communities, accommodated in institutions or not, children of families living below the poverty line, and all others who might need individual support for building up their self-confidence and their awareness that they can be full-fledged Bulgarian citizens.

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CHAPTER 14:

Case study – Slovenia

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1. Introduction

Slovenia faces challenges similar to those experienced in many other European countries in dealing with the early school leaving (ESL) issue. However, from a research perspective, the case of Slovenia is especially interesting for the following two interconnected reasons. First, Slovenia is one of the countries with the highest rates of education enrolment and the lowest number of early school leavers. According to official statistics (Eurostat, 2014) the rate of ESL has declined from 6,1 % in 2001 to 3,9 % in 2013, which means that only a small proportion of young people aged 18–24 have not achieved an upper secondary education (15-19 post-compulsory education). The expansion of education at the secondary and tertiary levels leads to a common assumption that early school leaving is not much of a problem because of the high quality and effectiveness of the Slovenian educational system.

However, the situation seems likely to be more complicated and complex, particularly when the second reason for Slovenian specificity is considered. We speak about a national verified and publicly financed comprehensive reengagement programme for early school leavers with the name Project Learning for Young Adults (PUM), which was endorsed by the national Ministry of Education in 1999. PUM is the non-formal and alternative educational programme for young people aged from 15 to 25 years, who failed in school, who are

not enrolled into regular educational programmes, who do not have primary or basic vocational education, and are unemployed. The programme was designed in response to the years of failure to prevent students dropping out of school in early 1990s. Its basic purpose is to motivate and encourage young people to return back into school. Today the programme, which works in various towns in all Slovenian regions, has developed into one of the most effective measures and mechanisms for reducing the rate of early school leaving in Slovenia. Moreover, educational centres where this programme takes place have become a model for several experimental programmes for early school leavers, and the principal site for the creation and testing of new knowledge about pedagogical approaches for working with early school leavers.

The experimentation with the mentors and the young people within the Slovenian part of the Success at School project was carried out in collaboration with one of those educational centres, which is located in Ljubljana and operated by the Bob Institute, a non-for-profit institute for education and cultural activities. In our first visit to the Bob Institute in autumn 2013 we perceived that there were a wide variety of activities for youngsters, and that the scope of their mentoring work with young out-of-school people has long since outgrown the original pedagogies and curriculum associated with the programme PUM. In this article, we describe the process and the results of our experimental field study of volunteering as an educational approach for early school leavers conducted with mentors and young people in a creative, inclusive and engaging context of the Bob Institute.

2. Context

The experimentation in Slovenia was designed as a series of activities in a period of six months from December 2013 to June 2014. The activities were organised in collaboration with the Bob Institute, and in a form that was familiar to the young people involved. That means that we have followed three general methodological approaches that are commonly used in the Bob Institute, and thus compatible with the existing programme for early school leavers that is run by the Bob Institute from 2008 onwards: voluntary participation, project-based learning, and participative pedagogy.

Participation of the young people and the mentors was voluntary and based on goodwill. For this reason, the young people had the option not to participate in all activities of the experimentation. Nevertheless, altogether thirty young people (twenty-two boys and eight girls in out-of-school situation) participated in at least one activity, and most of them participated in both parts of the experimentation – the sessions on educational dimensions of volunteering and the practical volunteering activities. All those activities were carried out in the form of project-based group work in an informal setting.

Project learning is an approach to teaching and learning that engages students in learning essential knowledge and skills through practical, collaborative and problem solving activities. It empowers them to integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a concrete solution to a defined challenge. The approach is based on the assumption that learning is basically a constructive process that should be focused on students and 'learning in action'. It motivates young people to take an active part in their learning and break down the walls of boredom and apathy (Shaffner, 2003). Consequently, students are not perceived as passive recipients of education, but active builders who construct their knowledge, skills and understanding of the world through reflection, interaction with others and participation in meaningful social experience. From this point of view, project-based learning that emphasises the importance of practical experience in learning is a highly promising approach, not only for the integration of volunteering into education, but also generally for increasing the motivation of young people to stay in school or return to school if they have dropped out.

A project-based approach differs from traditional or standard classroom instruction. This is one of the main advantages of this approach since many young people who leave school early have negative experiences at school. When the young people from the Bob Institute expressed their views on why they disengaged from school two reasons stand out. One relates to various personal and individual circumstances that the young people face in their daily life, the other relates to their dislike of school environment which they perceive as alienating, inflexible and restrictive. In our experimental sessions, the young people often described a negative relationship with teachers as an important factor for leaving school. For this reason they feel the project-based environment is much more engaging than traditional schooling. The young people reported that positive and supportive relationship with the mentors from the Bob Institute motivates them to learn and encourages them to think about their future plans and their return to school. Interestingly, young people who participated in an Australian second chance programme TAFE gave very similar answers when asked about the factors that support their re-engagement. Students commonly mentioned a flexible or adult learning environment and respectful relationship between students and teachers (Murray & Mitchell, 2013).

Two elements are crucial for success of the project-based learning. The first one is a mentor (or mentors) who guides the learning process and defines the learning objectives. The second one is the selection of a learning project or activity to attain those educational objectives that have been defined. There is one further point to be noted here concerning the role of mentors or educators in the project-based approach. Namely, mentors are not the only source of knowledge and information from which students are expected to build their learning. They act as facilitators, guides or tutors, rather than 'classical' teachers or knowledge transmitters. They take the role of supporting and guiding students through

the learning experience with feedback and suggestions for improvements, further steps and new ways to achieve the final goal. Their responsibility is to take an active role in making decisions about the purpose of the project and the content that is being assessed (Shaffner, 2003). But student choice is a key element of project-based learning. Students have the freedom and ability to learn through a variety of project activities that will best address their specific learning interest and needs. Mentors 'just' oversee each step of the process and approve each choice before the student embarks in a direction (Bell, 2010). With the project-based learning, which can be seen also as experimental learning, students are encouraged to explore their own learning interests, to work cooperatively, to think in original ways to find solutions for real-world problems, to use appropriate learning resources, and to practice the skills of creative thinking by showing that there are many ways to successfully complete the project or activity. The researchers from the Ergo Institute have identified this context of the project-based learning highly appropriate for exploring the educational potential of volunteering and implementation of the Success at School experimentation.

On the other side, the mentors from the Bob Institute involved in the Success at School project have extensive knowledge and experiences in project-based learning for young people, particularly those who have, or might have left school early. In addition to the PUM programme, some other project-based and youth work projects are underway to improve the active participation, career development opportunities and independent living skills of young people. Twelve mentors from the Bob Institute joined the experimental part of our project. Together with three researchers from the Ergo Institute, they were key actors in the process of planning as well as in the implementation of the sessions with the young people, the mentoring training and the practical volunteering experiences for the young people.

3. Preparing the ground

As planned in the Success at School project, the experimentation in Slovenia consisted of three parts. The first was a set of four sessions with the young people on volunteering and education. In the second part, we carried out two stakeholder meetings and three sessions with the mentors dedicated to the issues of mentoring and learning through volunteering. The challenge of the third part was to offer the young people the opportunity to engage in volunteering activities. All parts of the experimentation were conducted in collaboration with the Bob Institute. The acceptance of the Bob Institute to be involved in the Success at School project as well as the availability of the volunteer mentors to participate in the experimental phase of the project were of essential importance to gain the access to the young people who are out of school. Therefore, with the support of the

mentors who were approached individually and through collegial contacts, we introduced the Success at School project to the young people. In the second step, we integrated the project into the existing programme for early school leavers as a package of additional and complementary activities in which the youngsters may voluntarily choose to participate.

In order to adapt our experimentation to the interest and needs of the young people and project-based methodology that is close to them, the first stakeholder meeting with the Bob Institute was organised on December 10th, 2013. During the whole day meeting with the mentors and the participants of the programme for early school leavers, the researcher from the Ergo Institute participated in various activities that took place this day in order to familiarise herself with the mentors, the young people and the learning context. Later on, after getting to know each other, we decided to work collaboratively to implement the Success at School experimentation. The first experimental session with fourteen young people and eight mentors was carried out already on this day. The main purpose of this introduction session was to give information about the Success at School project, to prepare the young people to participate in the experimentation, and to develop positive group dynamics, relationships and confidence. On the morning of this day and after the session with the young people, the researcher met with the mentors only, to discuss in detail the planned process of experimentation, the mentor's responsibilities, ethical and methodological issues, and expectations about the volunteering activities that are appropriate and should be conducted.

The next meeting with the Bob Institute was organised on February 12th, 2014. After the second stakeholder meeting with the mentors where we discussed the methods of non-formal education and project-based learning, the second experimental session with the young people was carried out. The session, attended by sixteen young people, was undertaken in an informal manner through open interviews and group discussion about their experiences and feelings related to education and volunteering. The session lasted approximately 90 minutes and provided an overview of the interest and needs of the young people and their attitude towards volunteering and education. Generally, the young people who participated in the session had negative experiences with schooling and positive attitudes toward volunteering, despite the fact that only half of them had concrete previous experience with practical volunteering activities.

However, this seemingly paradoxical finding is not really surprising. The research (partially performed within the Success at School project) on how volunteering is taught to young people in Slovenia, showed that even though volunteering is not systematically included in education, and even though the schools in Slovenia do not require their students to take part in any volunteer activity, Slovene students are nevertheless more involved in school volunteering activities than their peers in other countries (Bezjak & Klemenčič, 2014). At

the same time, our findings, based on international ICCS 2009 research, showed that past volunteering activities of Slovene students in general (not just offered by schools) are below international average. But, the proportion of students who expect volunteering to help people in the local community in the future is more than 70 %, which is significantly above ICCS international average (Bezjak & Klemenčič, 2014).

Much of our first two sessions with the young people (conducted before the start of the practical volunteering activities) were spent in open discussion that confirmed the findings of our above-mentioned research and the positive attitude of the young people towards (future) volunteering. The sessions also revealed that generally, the young people do not perceive that volunteering could be as effective as traditional learning approaches. For this reason, we have put the emphasis on educational dimension of volunteering in a further two sessions with young people that had taken place during the youngsters' involvement in the volunteer activities. Furthermore, the link between education and volunteering has been discussed intensively in our training workshop for the mentors in March 26th, 2014, exactly one week prior to the start of the mentoring process and an ongoing ten-week volunteering experience. The workshop entitled 'Volunteering as a Pedagogical Approach for ESLs' that was held in the Ergo Institute was intended to assist particularly non-professional mentors to improve their knowledge about the educational impact of volunteering, and increase their skills in working with the early school leavers.

The contents of our sessions with the mentors were strongly influenced by the composition of our mentor group, which included four professional mentors from the Bob Institute who have the national licence for working with early school leavers in the PUM programme; eight youth workers and educators from the Bob Institute with practical experience in non-formal education setting, and three researchers from the Ergo Institute. Therefore, the format of the training for mentors was adapted to meet their professional needs and was supplemented with approaches based on project learning and contents related to educational outcomes for young people out-of-school. The mentors were encouraged to share their experiences, ideas and stories, especially about successful practices and individual youngsters. From this perspective, the main methods used in mentors' training process were open discussion, exchange of knowledge and peer-education. In our case, active and participative role of the mentors from the Bob Institute was of special importance at every stage of the experimentation both, because of their professionalism and because they were already familiar and confident in each other and with the young people. Their support was essential for the successful implementation of the experimentation, which lasted only six months.

4. Volunteering and mentoring in action

In April 2nd, 2014, after two meetings with mentors from the Bob Institute, one training workshop for mentors, and two sessions with young people, the experimentation in Ljubljana turned to one of the most challenging aspects of the Success at School project – the practical volunteering activity carried out by the young people under the guidance of the mentors. The purpose of this 'learning in action' was to empower the young people to better understand the learning potential of volunteering and the educational value of directly experiencing practical engagement. Using project-based methodology and participative approach, the young people have identified the activities that are performed in the Bob Institute in order to get involved as volunteers. Finally, the young people decided to participate in the co-organisation of a youth festival with the name NEXTival, which was already scheduled for the first week of June. The motivation of the young people to choose this activity was linked to the fact that this youth festival is an annual event for promoting educational, cultural, artistic and other achievements of early school leavers and other silenced young people without a public voice or public place in which to say it. A high level of personal interest and a desire to help other young people in the same kind of out-of-school situation (other participants and visitors of the festival) were very much welcomed for their engagement in selected activity.

As already mentioned, the ten-week mentoring period started in April 2nd and ended in June 11th, 2014. The mentors worked with the young people on a daily basis from Monday to Friday, approximately one to four hours per day, depending on the complexity of the tasks and the time line of the festival. The frequencies and the ways in which the mentors worked with the mentees varied since matches were made according to the professional background of each mentor and the agreed allocation of tasks among the mentors. The co-organisation of the one-day festival in the centre of Ljubljana, which is quite a challenging task in itself, required planning and coordination for both mentors and young people. Although many decisions were taken together, during the orientation sessions, the young people were divided in working groups on the basis of their interest. This means that, in practice, each mentor worked with a group of mentees, and that each mentee received guidance from several mentors with no one person being especially influential. Thus, the mentoring process was undertaken in the form of group mentoring or mentoring cycles, in which one mentor was assigned to several mentees who, consequently, have benefited from more than one mentor, rather than a dyadic model of one-to-one mentoring relationships. Our experimentation, as well as previous experiences of the mentors involved, confirmed that multiple mentoring relationships could have greater effect on mentees than the more traditional, individualistic and hierarchical mentoring relationships.

During the volunteer activities the young people worked in groups to complete various tasks related to event management, public relations, marketing, data collection,

design, preparation of the venue and the schedule of the activities in the festival. One of the most exciting but also most ambitious tasks was the creation of the logo and the promotional video for the NEXtival. Here, the cooperation among the youngsters and the mentors resulted in the creative idea of spelling out a name of the festival by making letter shapes with their bodies. With the help of camera, modern technology, mentors and the Bob Institute, the 21 seconds video was recorded and uploaded to YouTube (http://youtu.be/H3Jbx_1G3hc).

The young people and the mentors were highly satisfied with the outcomes of the mentoring process and its final result – the successfully organised and well-attended festival, which was held in the Zvezda Park in Ljubljana on June 5th, 2014. The event that included a number of workshops, artistic performances and free-pancakes for performers and visitors also hosted two open space Success at School experimental sessions, one with the young people and one with the mentors. The orientation session with fifteen mentors focused on the analysis of their mentoring experience over the last weeks, and the reflection on how this experience differed to other learning lessons in which they participated in the past years. The main issue discussed with the youngsters was similarly devoted to the educational value of volunteering from their personal experience to be involved in the co-organisation of the festival. The session with sixteen young people (out of twenty-four who participated in volunteer experience) revealed that they prefer the attractive and practical learning activities, which had to be different from the usual 'boring' classes. Moreover, they indicated that they found the practical volunteer activities useful for their learning and that the mentoring was very helpful, supportive and stimulating.

On June 12th, 2014, exactly one week after the NEXtival when all activities related to the festival, as well as the mentoring process, were completed, the last two sessions with the young people and the mentors were organised. Both sessions were carried out on the same day, separately, although four mentors were also attending the session with the youngsters that started at morning. The three-hourly session with fifteen young people was divided in three parts. In the first one, the session took the form of a facilitated group discussion in which young people were asked for their views on education and on the strengths and weaknesses of various pedagogical approaches. In the second part the session moved to their ideas and suggestions for a system of education that meets their needs and which they consider engaging. The session ended with the individual discussion with some youngsters on their feelings about educational experience and relationship with the mentors.

The young people that participated in this last session highlighted four aspects of modern learning practice that should be considered also when designing new learning

models or training for early school leavers or youngsters who face difficulties at school. First, the young people prefer interactive, dynamic and flexible educational approaches over traditional approaches such as lectures, memorising the data and authoritarian teaching. Second, they have a short attention span and get easily bored because they are comfortable with modern technology that allows them mobile access to information and resources and produces significantly higher level of stimuli than classical learning. Third, they love challenges and practical learning since they always want the answer to the question 'what is here for me?'. And fourth, they want to enhance individual empowerment and to bring a positive change in their lives (Bezjak, 2014). Especially here, the role of mentors who give them support and tools to make this change with a two-way interaction, which they did not find in schools, is particularly important.

As one of the mentors from the Bob Institute noted in our last session on the educational effects and outcomes of the experimentation in June 12th, the early school leavers want to learn and improve their skills for a variety of personal and professional reasons, but often schools or programmes that use only traditional educational approaches, do not know how to address their needs, problems or specific situation effectively. From this perspective, the project-based learning where young people work on projects or activities that are interesting for most of them and not directly related to the school curriculum, could have an impact on their changing attitude towards learning. Furthermore, because they are free to choose those activities and the manner of their participation in them, they are often very successful in completing those activities. All this motivates and encourages them to return to school or formal education and training.

5. Lessons learnt

The main attention of the experimentation in Slovenia has centred on the educational value of volunteering and the ways in which volunteering may be involved in learning and thus become an efficient approach to non-formal learning for the early school leavers. The focus of our fieldwork was, therefore, to test experimentally the possible educational potential of learning through volunteering rather than volunteering in itself. In other words, our aim was not to involve the young people in concrete voluntary organisations or to motivate them to join those organisations in the future. On the contrary, our aim was to encourage them to reflect upon the significance of practical learning through their personal volunteer experience under the guidance of the mentors. In doing so, we have tried to show them the new perspective on learning and different approach to learning, where the learning can be engaging, relevant and enjoyable in the same time.

From the viewpoint of our experimentation, however, we see an important distinction between traditional volunteering and youth volunteering. Since volunteer experience of the young people involved in the experimentation was designed as the learning process, the attention was paid to the idea of learning through experience, which became the goal rather than formal volunteering in the traditional sense of the word. While traditional (or adult) volunteering refers to the unpaid work people do for another person, group or organisation, youth volunteering under the guidance of mentors who primarily work in the field of education and not within the voluntary organisations, as in our case, includes a series of preparation activities on how to incorporate the learning into volunteering. This learning focuses on educational goals that directly relate to volunteer experience, and the evaluation of concrete learning that was realised through volunteer activity. Accordingly, the concept of youth volunteering on which we have built our Success at School experimentation, gives greater meaning to the educational outcomes obtained by the young people in the volunteer experience over the other results of their volunteering.

Our field study confirmed that volunteering has great educational potential. It can provide motivating and engaging context for early school leavers to learn and change their attitude towards learning. But, this type of learning through volunteering needs to be designed well in advance. Based on our experience with the Success at School experimentation in Slovenia, the volunteer activities should be integrated in the educational curriculum or in any other form of educational plan where the educational purpose of volunteering is clearly defined. Another important issue is that volunteer activities should be well guided during the entire process, from the initial planning to the final evaluation by mentors with relevant experience or training in both, education and volunteering. Especially because an analysis or reflection of what and how has been learned from volunteer activity is essential when talking about volunteering as the learning practice or even pedagogical approach for working with early school leavers.

The young people that participated in our Success at School sessions in Ljubljana noted that they want to know more about the forms and methods of learning. Even more, receiving help with learning was one of the main expectations that the young people had when enrolling in the programme for early school leavers in the Bob Institute. From this point of view, our experimentation achieved its primary aim of contributing to the creation of a supportive environment for the early school leavers who were involved in our project. Since many of them intend to return to school for the next year, the researchers from the Ergo Institute are planning to continue the collaboration with the Bob Institute also in the future, for the next generations of early school leavers.

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