

Impact Plus Guide



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PARTNERS

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INTRODUCTION

The following digital guide “Impact Plus Guide” focuses on the impact which every project has on individual, organisational and community level, as well the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the project results after the EU grant has been used up. The guide is designed to provide a valuable resource to youth workers and non-profits for an effective project management, underlining the importance of non-profit organizations staff and volunteers. The “Impact Plus Guide” ensures the sustainability of the project results as well establish a list of recommendations and good practices. The following digital guide was written taking into account the experience and the opinions of all participants and trainers that took part in “EuroIMPACT Plus” (EP) project.

EP is a Strategic Partnership of non-profit organisations which focuses on promoting high-quality youth work aiming to provide youth workers

all the necessary knowledge and Project Management (PM) tools to prove the benefits of PM methodology and depict situation of the awareness and usage of different PM methodologies and tools in non-profit sector. The project aims to create innovative resources for youth work and equip youth workers with the necessary skills to manage a project in the most efficient way. In addition, EP has been funded by UK National Agency with support from the European Commission through Erasmus+ Programme, and project consortium is led by OpportUNITY UK, gathering together the following partner NGOs: Asociación Projuven (Spain), GEYC (Romania) and Alternativi International (Bulgaria).

“Impact Plus Guide” is divided into four main chapters:

- Impact on Individual level
- Impact on Organisational level
- Impact on Community level
- Project Sustainability

Chapter 1:

Impact on Individual level

1. Overview

The impact of any project is one of the significant steps one needs to focus on as it is that element which evaluates the success of the project, and its relevance to the needs of an individual, a group, or a community etc. Therefore, when planning and developing a project the questions WHY and HOW are key elements to consider in terms of impact. When it comes to projects funded by the Erasmus+ programmes, many organisations are inclined to focus more on the timetable of the main activity and assign the other aspects of the project (impact, dissemination, visibility) to a secondary position.

- WHY?

For a project to be successful it has to be relevant to the needs of its target groups and must enable them to benefit from its results. A project which does not offer anything is considered redundant,

unnecessary, therefore the investment put into that project it was wasted.

When talking about European projects (specifically, projects funded by the Erasmus + programme) impact is one of the most important aspects as the values of this programme. The purpose of which is to help young people and youth workers to deal with different obstacles in their communities at individual and professional level. In this case, an organisation and its partners have to insure their project are relevant and its results help these groups in combating obstacles.

- HOW?

There are different steps an organisation or a partnership of organisations can take to insure their project have a positive impact on their target group. The first step in making sure this is achieved is to conduct research to identify the needs of the young people. The research can be performed using different methods online and offline (surveys, field trips, interviews, observation etc.). When the idea of the project is identified, the next step is the actual planning and preparing of the entire project when an organisation needs to establish specific activities to

help them evaluate the impact of the project (before the main activity of the project – activities to evaluate the response of the target group, stakeholders to the project; during the main activity - daily evaluation and reflection activities; after the main activity – activities to evaluate how participants used what they learnt in their communities.



A well planned strategy for the impact part of a project would not only benefit the target groups, but also those who planned and implemented the project as the process of evaluating the impact would serve as lesson-learning and improvement. To put in different words, a properly prepared evaluation of the impact can indicate if the project is working as it was intended and can show what needs to be improved and what to be changed.

The impact of a project is primarily understood at different levels like:

- Individual - improving people's wellbeing
- Community - supporting communities of interest / subsectors or geographical communities
- Organisation - changing the way organisations work, deliver services, reach beneficiaries
- The wider sector or society at large - impact over a wide geographical spread
- The economic, political or physical environment - targeting a strategic issue, influencing policy or debate.

2. The impact at individual level

When talking about impact at the individual level, it is important to consider the different levels a project has to influence in terms of soft outcomes. During the main activity of a project, be it a training course, a seminar or youth exchange; the trainers/facilitators have to be able to determinate if the outcomes had an impact in developing and



improving the skills and competences of those who took part into the training activities.

Example of soft skills and competencies to consider at individual level:

- Interpersonal skills: social skills and coping with authority
- Organisational skills: personal organisation, and the ability to order and prioritise
- Analytical skills: the ability to exercise judgement, managing time or problem solving
- Personal skills: insight, motivation, confidence, reliability and health awareness.

Based on the theme of a project, at the end of the main activity participants in the project should be able to identify what new skills they have developed and how would these skills help them to support young people in their communities or, if young people themselves, how would these skills help them to cope with the issues they face in their communities and what type of activities they can initiate to make their voice heard and help the others.

These soft skills and competences are also important at professional level and can help young people to position themselves on the labour market as employers are looking for individuals who possess these skills. Moreover, employers are looking for individuals who are able to integrate quickly in a team and who are able to plan and organise their activities based on the needs of the team.



The soft skills can be categorised as follows:

- Working skills: team working, problem solving, numeracy skills, information technology, communication
- Attitudes: motivation, responsibility, recognition of prior skills
- Personal skills: levels of attendance, timekeeping, self-awareness, levels of concentration and/or engagement
- Practical skills: awareness of rights and responsibilities, ability to complete forms etc.



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3. When and how to evaluate the impact at individual level

At the end of every Erasmus+ project participants (young people, youth workers or those interested in the topic of the project) are invited to reflect on their skills and competences they developed or improved during the main activity of the project. There are different methods to evaluate the level of impact and it should be conducted during the entire implementing part of the project. Therefore, there are three main periods when the evaluation of the impact should be applied, before, during and after the main activity.

Before the main activity

Every Erasmus+ project has a pre and after campaign of promoting the upcoming and results of an event. In the upcoming phase all partners involved in a project have the opportunity to promote and increase the visibility of the project among their target groups and stakeholders. This is the time to make sure all who can benefit from the implementation of this project are informed and aware of the opportunity to get involved and share

with their peers what issues their community faces with.

There are different two main ways to makes sure this step is achieved: online and offline. As everyone is spending substantial daily time online, distributing the news within networks of young people from different communities is an efficient method as it can reach a broad area (in geographical terms - national, international etc.). Offline is another method by taking part in different events for young people where you can start networking with them and make them aware of the variety of possibilities for involvement.

How would these methods have an impact at individual level? The public would become more aware of the issues around them, they would start to increase their participating and initiative skills. They would become disseminators themselves while sharing their knowledge about the event; thus, communication skills would be developed.



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During the main activity

The main activity is the key factor to determine if the impact strategy is working as planned. During this phase, one can evaluate if it has been successful in the way it was intended to be and if there will be significant impact on the young people at regional, national, international and European level.



There are many ways to identify how participants use their current skills, develop new skills, and implement what they learn. The activities to collect the information can be done at group level, individually by using personal diary, discussion in

small groups, observation etc. As for the Erasmus+ projects, we are focused on non-formal education and non-formal activities to identify the level of impact.

Example of activities:

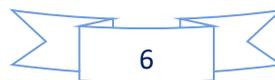
To identify current skills: trainers organise workshops where participants are invited to share the current issues in their communities. In these activities, trainers/facilitator can identify from the results of the workshop how each member of the group participated and how each of them contributed.

To identify improved and newly acquired skills:

- Reflection activities where participants are offered the space and time to reflect on their contribution in activities using either personal notebooks (used daily, this tool is provided by the Erasmus+ programme, namely the Youthpass).
- Daily evaluation: with reference to each day's activities, trainers carry out workshops (storytelling, hand or weather evaluation, or



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even circle talk) to identify if the group learnt anything they can use afterwards.

- Mid and final evaluation: participants can look back to the beginning of the event and identify how much they have evolved (it can be written, oral or both, or it can be done through games).
- Observation: this is done mainly by trainers/facilitators who can easily observe how the group evolves throughout the entire time in the workshops, with the rest of the group and in the local community.
- Free time activities: games, group activities, one to one talk, tutoring.
- Workshops initiated by the participants: for example, small group workshops

After the main activity

The impact after the main activity can be evaluated mainly via reports from partners who normally would keep in touch with young people/youth workers. And they should support them to implement what they have learnt during their training time. After the project ends, participants may have initiatives to develop their own projects for young people from

their community. This is a common result from such Erasmus+ projects and indicates young people got inspired to add their contribution to the development of the young people. The impact can be also measured from feedback of those who did not actually participate in the main activity, but they got in contact with those who did and they learnt about the results. This feedback can be online, we can measure the number of views and reacts (appreciation via comments, clicks etc.) to the online posts on websites, social media etc.



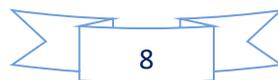
4. How to use the results of the impact evaluation?

At the end of the project, the partners should have a meeting (online/offline) to talk about the outcomes. At this point everyone would give their input and evaluate where they need to improve, change or adapt in future projects. The results of the impact should give a full overview of the relevance of the project. Did the project had the results we expected at the beginning? Were the participants relevant to our project? Was our project relevant to the needs of the young people? How were the participants influenced/motivated to continue their implication in combating the issues of the young people in their communities? What have they impacted us as organisers? What have we learnt from this? A proper conducted impact evaluation should give the organisers the possibility to answer to all these questions in order to be able to say if the project was successful or not. After the determination of the success or failure of the project, organisations can now develop new strategies to improve their future projects. The feedback they received will help them

to reorganise their methodology and plan projects suitable to the current needs of the young people.



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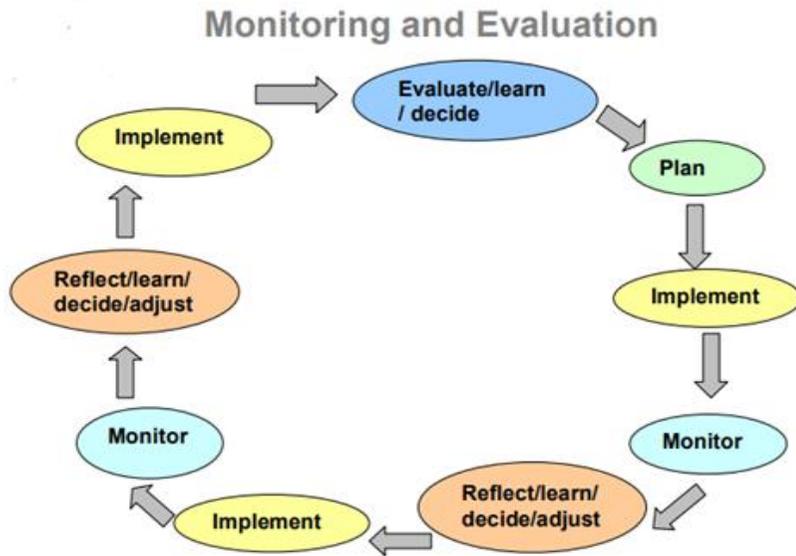
Chapter 2: Impact on Organizational level

In project management, people think what is most important occurs during the project itself. However, monitoring and evaluation of the impact is a key element to success of every project. Indeed, it gives the team the opportunity to analyse the project outcomes and effect as well as the impact on various levels. Moreover, most of the NGOs often concentrate on measuring the impact of each project in terms of the beneficiary group and forget the important element-the impact of each project on the operational capacity of the organization. The main aim of this chapter is to present practical guidance and concrete methods to be applied when running projects to measure the impact of each project on the organizational level. There are various analytical tools that could be applied in order to help project managers to successfully evaluate the effect of their projects.

Monitoring and evaluation enables an organisation to check the development and effect of the work. In many organisations, “monitoring and evaluation” is something that is seen as a donor requirement rather than a management tool. Donors are certainly entitled to know whether their money is being properly spent, and whether it is being well spent. However, the most important use of monitoring and evaluation should be for the organisation to ascertain if objectives are being met, whether the project had an impact, what improvements could be implemented, and how to increase the operational capacity of the organization regarding human resources. Evaluation is a tool that gives the management of the organization the information it needs to make decisions about the project or organisation, about changes that are necessary in strategy or plans. Through this, the constants remain the pillars of the strategic framework: the problem analysis, the vision, and the values of the project or organisation.

It is important to highlight that evaluation is a process not a one-step activity and it does not only include methods at the end of your activity/project.

Quality project management involves evaluation tools and techniques during all project phases as well as all target group, beneficiaries and the organization itself.



Why to evaluate the impact on organizational level?

- It helps you understand the process-from human resources and team work to operational capacity
- Help you formulate a strategic plan of the organization-to plan a strategy for development of your organization

- Sustainability of the concrete action/project for the organization in long term perspective
- Social effect-did the concrete project help you achieve the organizational aims and mission and what is the social effect.
- Is the concrete project contributing to increasing the experience of your organization/is there new knowledge, experience, competences, contacts, public image, recognition gained?
- Create good practices models and know how based on the evaluation to help the organization`s growth

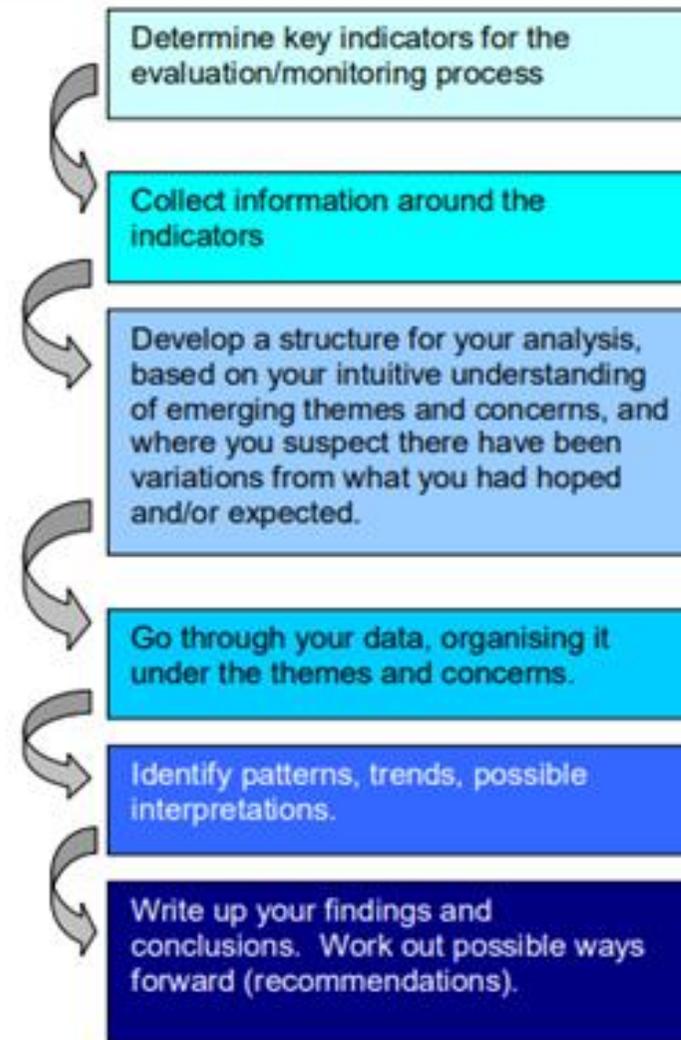
1. Evaluation Methods and Tools to measure Impact on Organizational Level

There are various analytical tools, methods and techniques project managers can use in order to measure the impact of their activities/projects both short and long-term on the organization itself. The evaluation on organizational impact could be done in two ways-external or internal. External is when you invite independent team, outside of your organization to conduct the evaluation. There are

certain advantages and disadvantages in both types of evaluation:

- The external evaluation is more likely to be objective as it is not related to the organization. However, someone from outside sometimes cannot understand quite much the organization's culture, mission, values and habits which could reflect on the key findings, especially those related to organizational impact.
- The findings of the external evaluator are also more likely to be credible, especially the positive ones.
- The external evaluators are usually trained and very experienced, however not very affordable.
- The internal evaluation about the impact on the organizational level could be more cost effective, but of course more time consuming.

The evaluation process, no matter what tools, methods and techniques project managers use have basic steps to follow. The following diagram would help you understand the process better and apply the most appropriate tools, tailored to your organization's needs, culture and people of course.



SWOT ANALYSES

This method is well known as very efficient when an organization/company/business defines its strategic plan but can be used to identify the impact of a project/action/program of the organization.



S.W.O.T. is an acronym that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. How those four are usually perceived:

- Strengths: characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others.

- Weaknesses: characteristics of the business that place the business or project at a disadvantage relative to others.
- Opportunities: elements in the environment that the business or project could exploit to its advantage.
- Threats: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project.

Strengths describe the positive results of an activity/project, tangible and intangible, internal to your organization. There are certain questions you can include in order to assess the strengths of the project on your organizations.

- What did go well?
- What are the tangible results of the project?
- How the project team improved?
- Did you become more competitive after finalizing the project?
- What are your strengths over the other NGOs after completing the project?



Weaknesses (internal, negative results)

Weaknesses when you use SWOT as evaluation tool are related to what costed the concrete project for your organization-was the outcome worthy? Sometimes NGOs project managers tend to put a lot of effort on projects that have little impact or even cause them a lot in terms of money/energy/time, etc. Useful questions for assessment to ask your team:

- What is the ratio between the project cost and project outcomes?
- Were the indicators regarding team improvement fulfilled?
- What was the negative effect if any of the project on the project team/individual and organizational level?

Opportunities (external-a result from the project)

Opportunities are the possible results and outcomes your NGO has achieved through implementing the concrete project. Opportunities reflect the progress and the positive change of the organization and the added value the project had on the organization.

- What is the added value of the project to the organization?
- Are there any new perspective/opportunities after implementing the project/ex new contacts, network, media coverage, etc.?

Threats

Threats reveals the risks that have occurred during implementing your project. Is it essential for project managers to assess them, especially to build on the risk management strategy of the organisation? The risk assessment will give you the answer how well your organization has improved in terms of risk management by implementing the concrete project.

- What were factors beyond your control that put your NGO/project at risk?
- How did the project team react to those risk?
- Was the occurred risk planned in the preparation phase of the project?

EXAMPLE-SWOT evaluation for European Voluntary Service project on NGO



Focus groups

Focus group is a social science research method to gather information about the opinions and experiences of a group of people about a topic through a facilitated group discussion. Project managers can use focus groups in order to assess the impact of the project on the learning and personal and professional development of the project team. The discussion is structured around selected topics/questions. Focus groups are very good at providing in depth information about opinions, attitudes and to answer 'why' questions. The project manager of the concrete program needs to make a plan and schedule the focus groups throughout the whole duration of the project. Moreover, it is important to have a focus group even before project start in order to reflect on the desired impact in terms of skills, knowledge, competences, attitudes. It is essential for project managers to prepare for the focus group meetings-to get all the needed data, prepare the necessary questions and most of all to document the focus group meetings in order to be able to use them for the final evaluation of the impact on organizational level. Focus group is a very

common technique but can be poorly executed unless well planned and facilitated.



Tips for focus groups:

- work with small group of people/if your team is bigger can have separate meetings/
- prepare well for the focus group meetings/get the last data regarding project implementation, results, challenges, etc./
- have all the questions prepared before
- document every focus group meeting
- Practice your facilitation skills with and managed well the group dynamics

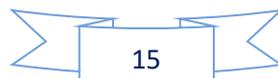
2. Impact, challenges, risks and results

Keep a project notebook or diary-it is in a way time consuming, but it will assist at the final evaluation both for you as project manager as a means of learning from mistakes as well as for the final report for donors. It will also help you measure the performance of your team, assess the existing strategies, methods and tools your team have been implementing.

- This should be kept from the very beginning of the thought process that is undertaken before a project is started and continuously updated throughout the whole phase of the project. This process will reach a conclusion when the project has been signed off and the full evaluation report has been completed.
- All of the project team`s improvement, queries and questions should be recorded.
- It is important to record all dates and times that entries are made so that specific issues/errors/problems can be avoided in future. Thus, if similar problems arise in future projects it can be clear how they were resolved



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and the timescale needed to get the project back on track.

- All of risks and challenges as well as the decisions applied should be documented
- You can also combine It with the focus group method and document it as part of the Project diary.

3. GOOD PRACTICE

Project “EVS GLOBAL”

Alternativi International is extremely proud with the successful implementation of project EVS Global which was evaluated and received Quality label prize for 2017 by the Bulgarian National Agency, administrating Erasmus + program. The project was mobility of youth workers and it was result of the long-term strategy of Alternativi International in the EVS field and the strong cooperation between the partners. The overall objective of the project was establishing contact between organisations from Europe and the EuroMediterranean region working in the field of EVS and support youth workers and EVS coordinators trough developing their skills,

knowledge and competence in the field, which lead to the development of high quality EVS projects with a global dimension.

The project had high impact on organizational level for each of the participating members of the organizations by building the operating capacity and increased skills and knowledge of human resources which lead to development and implementation of much more quality projects. Apart from that based on the project we have created network of NGOs who work with volunteers and particularly with EVS in Europe and Mediterranean region which is strengthening the cooperation between organizations from the two regions.



In addition, the partner organisations became more visible in their local/regional/national communities which will help them be more recognisable for young people.

Project “Volunteering 4 Strategic Development”



The project is a response to the fact that the percentage of young people who are active in civil Society-Bulgarian youth is exceptionally low when compared with other EU countries. The culture of

volunteering is not spread among young people and it is not perceived as a valuable to them. In response to these problems and the needs of young people, our team developed the project Volunteering for Strategic Development which is European Voluntary Service project. This involves 58 volunteers from program and partners countries working on development of alternative youth space- cultural and educational

centre which will act as a platform for local youth to achieve the following: (1) express their ideas, (2) provide cultural and social activities, (3) access to advice and quality youth information, (4) offer a place for sport, culture, dance, music, craft, and (5) a youth library to develop volunteer culture.

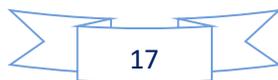
By implementing the long term strategy and the current project the team will:

- create an effective and sustainable model for engaging young people and offering a range of services and information
- change the cultural model - engaging more young people with useful extra-curricular activities, promoting reading, civic activism and volunteering
- Encouraging cultural awareness among young people
- Enlargement of civic activity of young people
- Changing attitudes towards volunteer work and perceiving it as a value and promoting volunteer culture.

The impact that the project already has reflects in both the acquisition of knowledge, skills, experience



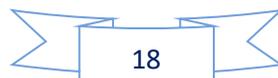
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and competencies by volunteers and organizations. In addition, changes in cultural models, attitudes and values, the development of volunteering and the creation of long-lasting positive societal changes have also occurred. This strategic EVS project will help to change the cultural model among local youth - will create alternative leisure time activities that will engage young people in useful and developing activities. The EVS volunteers will be contributing by bringing good practices from their countries which will definitely be a learning platform for the organization as well as on the other side. Indeed, once they complete their service, they will go back to their home countries and transfer the skills, knowledge and experience they gained while participating the project Volunteering 4 Strategic Development by developing similar youth centres and activities.



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Chapter 3:

Impact on Community level

Some of the specific objectives of Erasmus+ Programme in the field of youth are: to complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and to support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy as well as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, in particular through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of EU transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices and enhance the international dimension of youth activities. Considering these, the projects are expected, in the long run, to:

- have an impact on the systems of education, training and youth in the participating countries (KA1)
- trigger modernisation and reinforce the response to the main challenges of today's world: employment, economic stability and growth, but also the need to promote social, civic and intercultural competences,

intercultural dialogue, democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion, non-discrimination and active citizenship, critical thinking and media literacy (KA2)

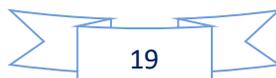
- support the active involvement of civil society networks and non-governmental organisations in policy implementation as well as to raise awareness of the results of European policies and of the Erasmus+ Programme and facilitate their exploitation at local, regional or national level (KA3).

**A community is a
group of people
who agree to
grow together.**

SIMON SINEK



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“A community is a group of people that agree to grow together” according to the British-American author, motivational speaker and organisational consultant Simon Sinek. As a result of many ties of interdependence among various communities around the world (due to globalisation) the projects with international dimension bring insights that move towards a better understanding of the current issues of the world (with impact in local contexts). Through the professional and personal growth of participants and the development of partner organizations, broader audiences benefit from these projects. The projects developed in the Erasmus+ framework envisage to have positive effects, on a wider public, in each of the specific communities (including the ones online) in which the project becomes visible, its results are disseminated and where its seeds create follow-ups. Thus, on medium and mostly on a long-term view, communities become beneficiaries.

The impact in the community has various dimensions: the way the project has effects upon the community where the project takes place, the way communities in which participants become social

agents grow or in which other stakeholders can multiply/ replicate the initiatives to achieve development or the benefits within the online communities.

MAKE AN *Impact*

1. How to make a positive impact in the community

Although we believe that every human is a mini-activist, engaging in struggles for different causes, taking action means including a larger community than the group itself. Taking action is designed to bring about a result which is valuable not only from the educational point of view, but also beyond: break down barriers and prejudices, confront biases, encourage dialogue, raise awareness, inspire. Each action in the community has an impact beyond the

group of participants, being empowering and engaging for themselves as well.

A group can take action in the community at any time. However, it is better occur after the group has engaged with training which allows them to better understand what would be the most effective way to meet the community. Involving the community, being it online or offline, in the learning process during Erasmus+ projects stands on the idea of practical actions linked to the process of building knowledge. Field work deepen the concepts learnt in the theory by strong notions experienced in the reality. Community learning is an excellent practice, providing information and developing skills for training in “real situations” of daily life and society.

According to the EQYP Standard of quality, the quality of the learning process is defined also by the engagement of your learners to multiply the project results, and create a positive social change in their communities, the quality of the project management involves fostering community involvement, the quality in partnerships means a long-lasting and sustainable cooperation with various key actors from the community, the quality in communication & PR

is committing to information-sharing and participation of all key actors of a project in a transparent and creative horizontal and vertical dialogue and last but not least the quality in financial planning and budgeting means having clear arrangements from the beginning among partners, and fulfilling these. Thus, we can emphasize the fact that the quality of any youth project depends on the quality of the engagement of the communities around it.

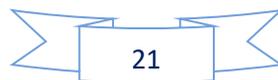
2. Reaching and assessing impact in offline communities

When we think of Erasmus+ projects impact in the offline communities, we should also refer to the particularities of various communities, such as rural, urban and mixed.

According to “Village International” publication by Salto-youth, young people in rural areas face some challenges; fewer opportunities for non-formal education, less cultural and leisure opportunities,



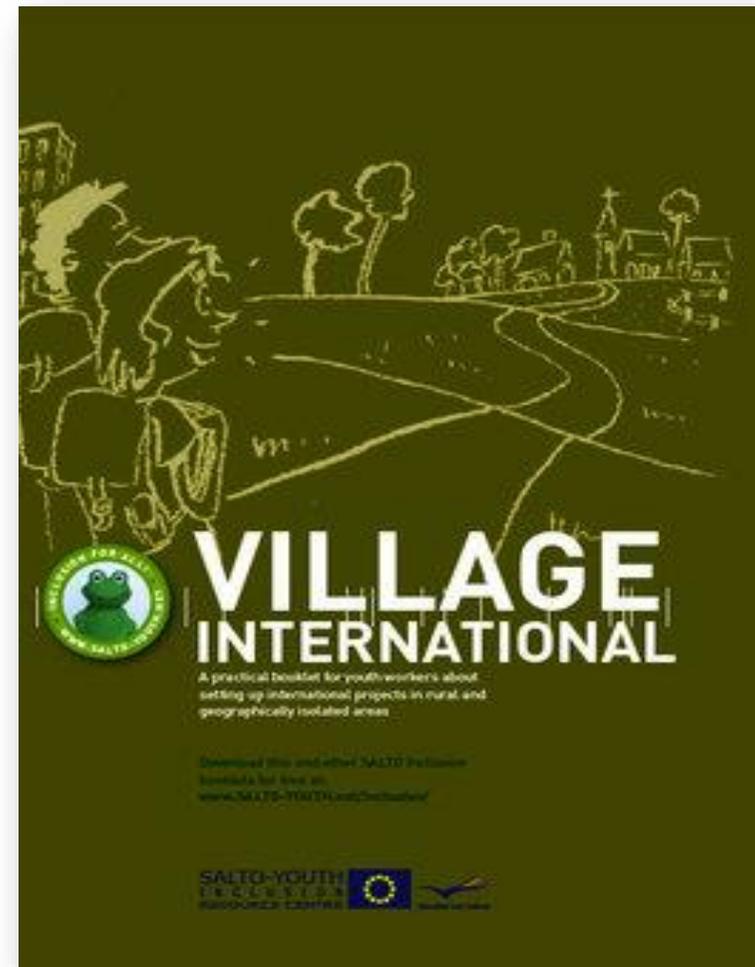
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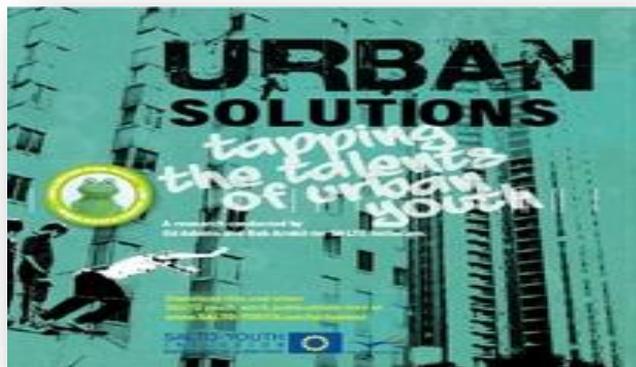
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higher unemployment, lack of information about youth related issues, less digital literacy, less opportunities to practice another language in different contexts. However, they also happen to be more friendly, have a good social network inside their community, create a safe environment, and are able to present their identity through customs and traditions. Some of the benefits of having an impact on rural communities through Erasmus+ projects are: breaking stereotypes and prejudices, making them more curious about other cultures, aware of diversity, forging permanent partnership with those inside and outside their community and fostering follow-up projects that can become sustainable. Involving rural community in the project can be done by: hosting in particular communities, engaging key actors from the community in the activities, addressing community challenges and foster cooperation between participants and locals, exchanging ideas, values and good practices.



In regards to the insights brought up by “Urban solutions” publication by Salto-youth, in some cities, different cultural and ethnic groups live parallel lives and there is a low level of interaction between them. That is the reason why, having an impact through Erasmus+ projects in the urban communities can activate interactions and raise awareness upon diversity and social challenges, increasing the cooperation to find creative solutions to common problems.



Involving the local community as a working method within Erasmus+ projects can also be done in a variety of ways: using host families for the participants, cooperation with local institutions, organizing field visits, joint outdoor or cultural

activities, as well as aiming activities at them, that would catch their attention and create a bond between participants and the community.

Offline communities can be involved in the needs assessment while planning the project, hosting it (including accommodation venue, activity locations & food), participating in the activities (through specific methods), ensuring visibility, disseminating and exploiting the results, as well as creating follow-ups.

Developing an evaluation culture within all people involved is a challenge for these projects and the assessment of community impact has to be a continuous process, combining various tools: such as focus groups, regular questionnaires, formal, non-formal and informal feedback, observations, and opinion surveys.

3. Reaching and assessing impact in online communities

When we plan to have an impact in online communities, we have to be aware of the

particularities of the members and address diversity in each of our endeavours. Building the online community around common values, but at the same time celebrating differences as part of individual identity, support engaging the members in meaningful dialogues, around a variety of topics. Having an impact in the online communities depends on how we can be relevant to the group and at the same time involve individuals to actively participate in your activities, even offline.

Online communities can be involved in the needs assessment and engagement in creating follow-ups as well, but mostly in ensuring visibility, disseminating and exploiting the results. Digital tools can prove an efficient tool to reach various audiences and gather them around your project, based on common values and principles.

To monitor and evaluate the efficiency of the impact of Erasmus+ projects in online communities there are lots of measurement tools. These tools can explore the following: how many unique users had access to the information you've shared, how they reached the information, how much time they have spent on it, through what devices, from which

locations, how many committed to your data (by sharing or commenting to it) and how many responded to your call for action (weather this is to fill in a survey, upload a photo/video, subscribe to newsletter, donate money, join an event, etc.). For example, each of the social media networks have their own metric measurement tools, and there are also platforms such as Hootsuite, Sendible, AgoraPulse, Sprout social or Buffer which can bring together all these pieces of information in meaningful data analysis.



4. Methods, tools & good practices

Thinking of youth exchanges, training courses or job shadowing opportunities, between the offline methods for having an impact on the communities, our top choices are:

- **Flash mobs** can connect a large number of people from the community (both online and offline) around your project, provoking them to become curious about it. Defined as a large public gathering at which people perform an unusual or seemingly random act and then disperse, typically organized by digital means (generally spread through social media), are an effective means to raise awareness upon various issues, make projects visible and have an impact in the community. Because people perform suddenly and live, the audience has their attention caught and become curious. A successful flash mob event depends on the element of surprise. Although it seems a random act, planning is an important step and the timeframe, location and roles must be well chosen. Nevertheless, do not forget to obtain permission from specific authorities,
- depending on the space you want to use, set the camera to record it and then make it visible online. One example is the Europe's Day Flash mob done on the 9th of May, during the European Quality in Youth Projects Training Course in Bucharest, Romania.
- **Treasure hunt** is a method that fosters the interaction between project participants and locals. Discovering the place, having to respond to various challenges (such as making short interviews, visiting the most important landmarks, taste local cuisine, learn some words/song in the local language, take pictures in different points of the location, find out interesting facts about it, etc.) allows people to become aware of the local realities and get connected with the local community in a fun way. Choosing the most appropriate tasks for the group (creative, funny, yet enriching also from the point of view of the topic of your project), preparing maps with marked start and end points, as well as emergency numbers and some hints about possible different local traditions/ customs/

approaches are important. Practical issues arise, such as allocating enough time, checking the weather forecast and, if possible, making sure each group has a native speaker or a person that understands the local language are issue to ascertain before introducing it as an activity in the project schedule.

- **Human library** (or Living library) is a great way to discover stories of people in the local community or vice versa. The method explores the idea of not 'judging a book by its cover' and aims to break down prejudices and stereotypes through meaningful dialogue. In the Human library, some persons are the books, which have stories to tell and questions to answer, and the others are readers that can choose the book they want to read and discover it through an open conversation for a limited period of time. The preparation of the Human library is a very complex task, from choosing and inviting persons from the local community to be the "books", choosing a broad topic that matches your project to link all the books and making the catalogue with titles (and

summaries; you can get creative and handcraft them), allocating enough time (at least two sessions of 1 hour and a half) and a proper space (with comfortable seats, light and fresh air, that allows small groups to hear each other well at the same time).



- **Intercultural evenings** are almost always in the Erasmus+ project schedule of activities and consist of presentations of and interactions between the culture(s) of each country of partner organizations. There are many formats that can be chosen for these intercultural evenings, yet one of the most important things to take into consideration when moderating the activity is to keep time which means to allocate

5-10 minutes (depending on the number of countries). This affords every groups a short promo introduction of their corner/ table and after a round was made each of the participants can join different tables and get deeper in their discovery. Moreover, participants have to be encouraged to devise interactive and creative ways of presenting their culture (teach the others a dance/ a song/ some words, make a short quiz, etc.) and avoid long presentations/ movies which can become tedious. Another way to keep things flowing is introducing a passport to each of the participants, which has to be filled with visa stamps from each country. In this way, you ensure that people are moving from one corner to the other. In order to receive their visa, they have to respond to a challenge (try some traditional food/drink, make a short quiz, learn three words in that language, etc.). If we are talking about youth exchanges, with few countries, we can allocate an evening per country, and in this way you allow them to explore more each culture. Involving the community in this kind of activity is a

challenge, which has to be addressed first by selecting and inviting a limited number of persons (to avoid chaos), introducing them through some short icebreakers and preparing them to present the host country as well. The interaction between locals and participants will have an impact on the community, through raising awareness on diversity, increasing knowledge about intercultural communication and Erasmus+ projects. We would suggest to invite either local youths who can become future participants or stakeholders that could support your projects in the future or other key actors depending on the topic of your project. One example is the intercultural night during the European Quality in Youth Projects Training Course in Bucharest, Romania, when youth and stakeholders people from the community were invited to join to foster the dialogue, including 4 pupils from the Art College who performed the Ode of joy.

- **Round tables** are efficient methods to bring together stakeholders from the community and participants. Although it is a form of academic



discussion, a round table can bring useful insights on the specific topic of your project through an open discussion and debate. The format suits the Erasmus+ projects as each person is given equal right to participate, as illustrated by the idea of a circular layout. It can connect the community to your project. One successful example is the Round table with stakeholders - Migrants & refugees during RefugeE++ Training Course in Agrigento, Sicily - Italy, which brought the perspective of competent authorities into the discussion, completing the puzzle of other activities which combined the views of youth workers and the refugees themselves.

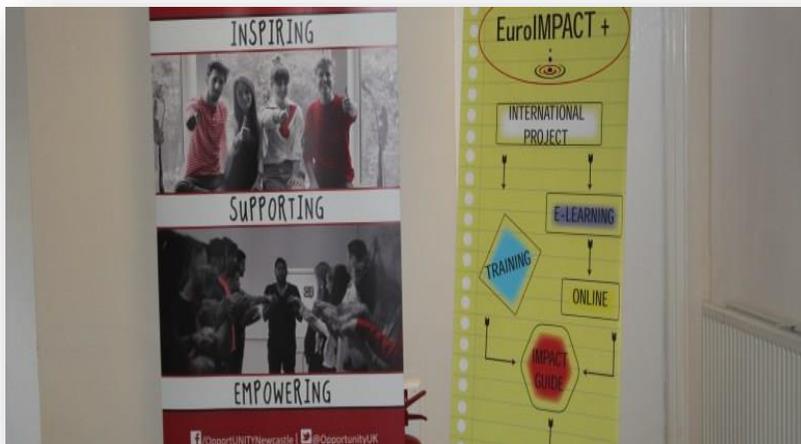
- **Field visits** also allow to make an impact on the local community where your project takes place. In accordance with the topic of the project, these are an actual learn by doing for participants and an eye-opening experience for the community, who discovers the benefits of intercultural meetings and the possibility of growth from understanding differences. It can

lead to long term partnerships, and follow-ups such as EVS.

- Some **energisers** can be performed outdoor. Although we cannot talk about a deep impact upon the community, these activities might catch the attention and boost curiosity of locals who see that something is going on. This can be a good hook for inviting them to join other activities.
- Implementing **awareness campaigns in the community** is one of the most efficient ways of having an impact at local level. Participants get to interact and discover the realities from that specific context and the community gains knowledge on Erasmus+ programme and on any other topic of interest of the project, around which participants decide to build their campaigns. Encouraging participants to be creative in their approach, as well as empowering them with tools to create efficient campaigns is the key to have a positive impact in the community. One successful example is



the activity implemented during EuroIMPACT Training Course, Newcastle, United Kingdom.



When we talk about EVS opportunities, making an impact in the community should be a one of the main focuses of the project. Fostering interaction between the volunteer(s) and the locals, during the activities but also in their free time, through all the possible means, can bring lots of positive outcomes. The challenge is how can you mediate this relation. The answer is to create getting to know each other and networking opportunities and encourage intercultural dialogue. Cohesion in a community

reflects group membership, active participation, social networks, levels of trust and information sharing inherent in social relations. Volunteers can create community bonds and interaction between its members that promote cooperation and respect, raising the quality of life. Not once, EVS volunteers had a long-lasting impact on communities well after they have finished their project.

Also considering Erasmus+ opportunities, among our top online methods and tools to have an impact in the communities, we can mention:

- **Facebook groups** are not only an easy way to create an online community, but they also offer efficient tools to make an impact among its members. One successful example is GEYC Community, a platform of sharing and communication among its members, who can access exclusive learning opportunities, initiated by GEYC. Inactive members for more than 6 months will automatically leave the group. As it has reached 2500 members, the community is closed, but has special opening days (e.g.: the NGO anniversary), when

members can invite and recommend a friend to join.



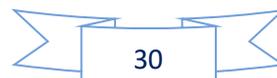
The group is moderated by a small team of community managers and they connect youths with the content, youths to youths and youths with the NGO. Instead of a list of rules, GEYC created the profile of the perfect member, named “GEYCuleț” (“Little GEYC”), which often provides tips & tricks on how members can behave online in the group, how they can be active and work together to create a positive change in their community, or what types of conversation are encouraged. In this way, members try to copy the way he acts and call themselves “GEYCculeți” (plural of “Little GEYC”). This strategy fostered their sense of

membership. The impact of Erasmus+ projects upon the community members is very meaningful. It is reached through continuous interaction, as well as an active implementation of visibility and DEoR activities.

- **Live broadcasting** is a very efficient way of sharing some insight of your Erasmus+ project to the community and foster a dialogue with them. In order to have a positive impact, be sure to choose the most appropriate moment (round table, debate, open discussion, etc.) to give them access “in the room” and introduce the activity and the project properly, for those who come across your video and do not know what it is about. No one would be interested to see and hear inside jokes or parts of activities, without understanding what is happening there. Make sure you make a Q&A session where you reply to all the concerns raised in the comments online. A positive impact will be reached only if the community feels engaged and part of your event.



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Chapter 4: Project Sustainability

In recent years, the relationship between project management and sustainability is rapidly gaining interest from professionals and academics as a need to integrate sustainability in project management has emerged. One of the priorities of the Erasmus Plus Programme focuses on the importance of the quality of the plans for ensuring the sustainability of the project; its capacity to continue having an impact and producing results after the EU grant has been used up. Moreover, the project results have to be used in longer-term and sustainability strategies must be developed in order to ensure that the partnership, project results and benefits will be sustained beyond the project lifetime. Projects can make a contribution to the sustainable development of organisations and although some aspects of sustainability are found in the various standards of project management, it has to be clear that the impact of sustainability is not fully recognized yet.

In the following chapter, you will learn more about what is sustainable project, several tools and methods that help its sustainability and we will also share effective practices in this direction.



1. Project Sustainability

The word sustainability is derived from the Latin *sustinere* (tenere, to hold; sub, under). Sustain can mean "maintain", "support", or "endure". The current use of the word implies something that continues for a long time. Looking at sustainability from a NGO point of view, it means continuing to perform and deliver project benefits to the primary target group

after the funding from a donor terminates. We can also add that sustainability means to maintain and continue your efforts after the funding is over. Unfortunately, to ensure a steady flow of funds for executing projects and programs is not so easy work. For organisations to continue to operate in the long term, they must take measures to ensure that they contribute to the well-being of society and the economy as a whole.

One has to understand that sustainability requires long term planning to facilitate diverse donor engagement and for improving institutional capacity of the target population. Sustainability planning is an important step for non-profits as it prepares an organisation to deliver positive outcome in the absence of primary funding. There are different aspects of sustainability that are to be considered while writing the sustainability plan for your organisation. As a NGO, you should think about Financial sustainability, Organisational stability and Programmatic sustainability of the organization.

It's important to integrate sustainability in all your projects right from the beginning. Sustainability has

to be consider as crucial part of the project management cycle and sustainable development concepts must be integrated in planning and managing the project over the whole life cycle.

2. Steps to Sustainability

In this part, we would like to give you some steps that can make your projects sustainable over time.



- **Long term vision and Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that

employees, volunteers and other stakeholders are working toward common goals. It also useful in order to establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. Just like any other organization, strategic planning is equally important for Non-Governmental Organizations. A strategic plan is not only important for promotion but also worthwhile for organizational development of NGOs. One of the most important part of the Strategic planning is the vision/plan for the future. Visioning answers basic questions such as what the organization wants to achieve in future, what it shall look like, what image it shall build in the minds of its prospects and who shall be the potential target group. If you know where you see your organization in 5 or 10 years, half of your work is already done. You can easily explain to your donors and team about your long- term goals and objectives.

- **Communication Strategy**

A strong communication strategy can help you share your project results with a large audience. Following the dissemination plan during and beyond the

project lifetime, with appropriate resources previously identified in each of the participating organizations, you can ensure the high-quality dissemination of project experiences and outputs to relevant stakeholders. Through project dissemination you can also attract cofounding or other forms of support that can contribute to the sustainability of your project. Well documented project results can help you in getting support from a range of stakeholders. Having a monthly communication plan can help you keep your social media profiles, webpage, target groups and stakeholders always update.



- **Develop new partnerships**

To develop a sustainable organization and projects, you should develop new partnerships. These partnerships will make you stable and will also help you in taking your mission ahead. Although having new partners is important, don't forget that it is equally important to manage existing relations with donors, stakeholders and beneficiaries in a proper way.



- **Volunteer engagement**

This is one of the main strategies of many NGOs. Volunteers and youth workers can help you sustain your projects engaging them with the performance of local activities. They are great human resources that can help you achieve your objectives. Volunteers can

organize local events, visit different schools, Universities, companies where they can present your current activities, projects result and future plans. Volunteers make NGOs more effective in getting the work done, and everyone gains something in the process. Volunteering is an incredibly valuable use of time, both for the organization and the volunteer. NGOs receive support that they need to be effective, and volunteers receive life experience, travel opportunities, and the joy of connecting with different cultures and making a difference. They have the opportunity to contribute to the brain of the organization, by offering their own insight and ideas to help solve problems and produce results.

- **Community involvement**

In the previous chapter you learnt a lot about community involvement. However, it's important to highlight again that the community is the key to have long term impacts from any projects. If you involve the community at various stages the probability for them to continue with some project aspects even after the project concludes. As the entire process will be participatory the skills and knowledge gained by

the present group of people, will be transferable and also replicable. In addition, sensitizing the community about the benefits of a particular project and then initiating a policy advocacy can also ensure sustainability in the long run.

- **Involving local government and departments**

Project consortium has to design long term action plan for the progressive roll-out of project deliverables after the project finished. This plan should be based on sustained partnership between education and training providers and key industry stakeholders at the appropriate level. It should include the identification of appropriate governance structures, as well as plans for scalability and financial sustainability. This plan must ensure the appropriate visibility and wide dissemination of work of the consortium, including at EU and national level, including details on how the roll-out will be implemented at national and/or regional levels with relevant governmental and sector authorities. As these agencies are permanent, they will help in

sustaining the project activities beyond the project duration.



3. GOOD PRACTICE

“EuroIMPACT Plus”

As an example of Good practice, we would like to present you our Strategic Partnership “EuroIMPACT Plus” and how the idea for developing this project came.

The project “EuroIMPACT Plus” is based on the results of one previous projects already carried out by OpportUNITY: "EuroIMPACT" - KA1 – 2016-2-UK01-KA105-024796;

“EuroIMPACT” was a mobility for youth workers under Erasmus Plus, KA1 programme, implemented in Newcastle upon Tyne - UK, from 19th to 26nd November 2016. Coordinator of this project was Opportunity UK and the other partner organizations were from Romania (GEYC, current partner in the Strategic Partnership), Malta, Spain, Croatia, Moldova and Ukraine. The training course involved 32 participants and aimed to adapt the project management methodologies (such as PMBOK) to the youth work reality at both local, national or European level in order to raise youth projects impact and to encourage the exchange of good practices. The project had a high repercussion on training course participants that got fresh ideas about raising their project impact together with the opportunities that presented themselves. To ensure sustainability of this training course and improve youth knowledge in the field, OpporTUNITY decided to go one step further designing the project “EuroIMPACT Plus”.

“EuroIMPACT Plus” main aim is to develop a specific PM methodology for Erasmus+ programme and enhance youth workers’ knowledge and practical

skills in handling the whole process of project management. The primary motivation for establishing this project came from the perceived need to further develop and boost “project management skills” in the youth field amongst youth workers and volunteers.



As part of our KA2 project, we developed e-learning courses which main objectives were to cover the full cycle of project management and provide youth workers and volunteers with a holistic look at the project management process. To ensure the sustainability of these materials, we disseminated to them through social media channels, offered them as free resource to other NGOs and Universities as well teach our youth workers and volunteers. Important to mention are the two training events financed by

the project that gave us great opportunity to train directly 35 beneficiaries and give them new learning opportunities in a European context. The training activities were aimed to share best practices, methodologies and to empower the participants to raise their projects impact and to produce a sustainable effect on young people. As you remember from the previous point, we said that engagement of volunteers is one of the best strategies that can help you sustain your projects. Due to participation to this project, participants developed the capacity of networking and of working in an intercultural team, improving their ability to manage a non-profit projects and act as multipliers of knowledge (especially in regard to other Erasmus+ projects giving educational opportunities to the youth of the local context).

Moreover, the project has resulted in a positive impact on partner organizations since all are now able to teach our volunteers/ youth workers with the materials, methods and tools developed and acquired during the project. We, partners, had an opportunity to increase our visibility at local and international level and the possibilities of future

collaboration with other organizations involved in social work and interested on the improvement of PM methodologies in their NGOs.

#PINOR



Before more than two years ago, Asociación PROJUVEN created a network called #PINOR (Projuven International Network on Refugees) with the aim of raising awareness on migration topic and peacebuilding activities. We started organizing different workshops and seminars in our local area and engaging as much as possible young people who were willing to know more about the migration issue. After one year of local activities, we decided to apply the project “#REFUGEESWELCOME” through which we could share all these knowledge and stories with young people from other countries as well to learn from them more good practices that we could apply in our local community. Moreover, we need to ensure sustainability to our local project #PINOR.

One year ago, PROJUVEN had an opportunity to implement in Málaga, Spain the project #REFUGEEESWELCOME. We gathered together 20 participants coming from Italy, Greece, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria, Hungary, France and Germany. The main objectives of this training course were to connect volunteers and youth workers to help those in need of assistance. In addition, we aimed to develop an informal network of youth workers and youth leaders tackling the Refugee Crisis through the use of social media and promoting follow up projects and initiatives. This would allow individuals/groups to reflect on the current European and National realities concerning the flux of migrants and refugees and their inclusion. In addition, this would allow them to learn and develop knowledge, competences and tools to work on diversity, intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue as well to share good practices related to youth work, inclusion and active participation.

It was a great project where participants could learn and share different tools, methods and good practices from their peers. It was intensive week that gave us excellent project results. Moreover, we

needed to share these results and make them sustainable over time. How could we ensure the sustainability of this project? First, teaching our volunteers and youth workers during the training week. All participants in our mobility were active youth workers of their sending organizations so they could transfer all the acquired knowledge once they came back home. A variety of new ideas of similar projects were born after this mobility, and we could keep sharing more and more good practices in this field. Currently, we are collaborating with the Italian NGO GRUPPO UMANA SOLIDARIETA' GUIDO PULETTI, partner in #REFUGEEESWELCOME on very interesting project called "Cross the borders". The main aim of this project is to share best practices, increase competences, skills and knowledge and find new and common paths for youth workers in EU to work effectively on sustainable inclusion and anti-discrimination strategies for migrant youth. Indeed, this will also benefit the new hosting societies in Europe as they will learn to work in close collaboration with the relevant stakeholders; with a special focus on to raise awareness and understanding on migrants vulnerable to radicalization. This project contains three training

courses: one in Hungary, one in Greece and one in Italy. For us, being part of this project is a great opportunity for teaching our youth workers and volunteers which can transfer all new knowledge to our community and contribute to the sustainability of our project #PINOR as well for the sustainability of “Cross the borders” project.



Another example of sustainability is our current Strategic partnership “Volunteers 4 ALL”, coordinate by Alternative International (Bulgaria) with partner NGOs, OEJAB from Austria, Futuro Digitale from Italy and PROJUVEN from Spain. Alternativi and OEJAB were also partners in our training course #REFUGEESWELCOME as well part of our international network #PINOR.

During the development of the application of #REFUGEESWELCOME project, we decided also to develop the project “Volunteers 4 ALL” that could give us more visibility and opportunity to work with volunteers and youth workers interested in working and dealing with young refugees and interested in the use of social media in their daily work. Recently, in the framework of “Volunteers 4 ALL” project, we elaborated e-learning courses that provide youth workers and volunteers with more information about the media journeys of refugees and the precise information they need. With this project, all organizations involved could benefit from improve processes and results, therefore, optimize available resources for new activities and opportunities. In addition, the project aims to contribute to sustainability and capacity building of the organizations as well contribute to reach the target groups and disseminate the project further.

Conclusion:

Many Erasmus Plus projects are designed to provide a clear short or medium-term benefit to the targeted stakeholders. However, designing projects to deliver a clear benefit in the earlier stages of implementation creates a cycle in which the community also provides support that increases a project's chance of surviving long enough to achieve longer-term goals and to deliver more lasting benefits. In addition, projects whose partners are truly committed to the larger goals are more likely to continuing the work even as funding and other material benefits end. The benefits of good cooperation consist of larger impact, the protection afforded by being part of a bigger movement, increased cost effectiveness and offer the opportunity to exchange ideas, information as well good practices. In addition, partnering with other organizations can also give possibility to projects access to government, NGOs, and other important network, that can ensure the sustainability of the project results.



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