



Key skills

- new opportunities for adults

A 'good practice' guide and toolkit



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
Key skills - international educational inspirations	7
GOOD PRACTICES	8
LATVIA.....	9
MUSIC THERAPY	10
REGIONAL EDUCATION CENTER	11
GERMANY	12
Info-Point Polregio.....	13
The State Integration Council	15
PORTUGAL	17
Boardgammers group.....	18
Peddy Paper.....	19
POLAND	21
JOB ENTERPRISE	22
RADIO SOVO	23
ROMANIA.....	25
Training of youth leaders.....	26
Occupational Centre for people with disabilities	27
GOOD PRACTICE TOOLKIT	28
<i>PARTNERS</i>	34

INTRODUCTION

Key skills - international educational inspirations

The problem of low key skills is a global problem and is reflected not only in connection with professional work, but is also a much broader, serious social problem. The consequences of this phenomenon are present in almost all areas of life. This is highlighted by the Council of the European Union in its Recommendation on supporting low-skilled adults. These people are at higher risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, their health is at greater risk, their life expectancy is lower, while their children are at higher risk of underachieving in school.

The difficult situation related to the global COVID-19 epidemic, the collapse of the economies of many countries, the growing unemployment rate in the world, the increasing sense of isolation of the inhabitants of many countries mean that access to the educational offer, improvement of the quality of services provided to people who are excluded or at risk of social exclusion is even more important.

Low key competences are one of the root causes of social exclusion, poverty and other social problems. In line with the important principle of lifelong learning, it is essential that learning plays a role in reducing/removing barriers and enabling the individual to play a more active role in society. The Institute for the Future (ITF) has published in its Future Work Skills 2027 report the skills of the future that will be necessary to stay productive and fit in the labor market in the coming future. These include the ability to learn, adapt and adapt to a changing world. We live in times when lifelong learning is particularly important, and the lack of education and the development of key skills (which also change over time) causes huge social inequalities and deepens the gap between poorer and richer societies.

*The main objective of the project **"Key Skills - New Opportunities for Adults"** was to **improve the competences of staff related to adult education and to exchange good practices in the field of models of educational support for adults with low key skills** used in partner organizations. The partnership, led by FOSa Federation, involves organizations from Portugal - Universidade Sénior de Évora, Latvia - Gulbenes novada pasvaldība, Germany - Polregio e.V. and Romania - Asociația Jugendzentrum Seligstadt.*

As part of the project, each partner was to organize 5-day study visits, during which best practices, methods, tools, innovations, etc. used to strengthen competences in adults were presented. The result of the project is this guide to the most interesting methods of non-formal adult learning that we learned during the international study visits within the project. We had a great opportunity to observe various approaches to adult education in various areas, including the extremely important problem of social integration of migrants in these times. The war in Ukraine and the accompanying wave of refugees seeking refuge across Europe have made this problem our common concern.

The authors of this guide would like to thank all the many hosting organisations who welcomed us during our visits and shared their knowledge and experience with us.

We hope that this guide will provide ideas and inspiration for other organisations for many years to come.

The project team

November 2022

Part 1

GOOD PRACTICES

LATVIA

Gulbenes novada pasvaldība



MUSIC THERAPY

What is it?

It is as simple as it sounds. In this method moderator try actively to involve and motivate people to sing together. Everybody can participate in that kind of therapy – young and old, people with disabilities or without disabilities. Music therapy help elderly persons with different disabilities to open up to others and facilitate their social integration. Music really connects people! Everyone participating have possibility to sing along with others and take part in activities. During the therapy people sing songs which are very well known in local society. That means that elderly people have possibility to sing songs form their youth which evokes a lot of positive emotions that they can share with other participants. This activity is very adaptable but there are some important things to keep in mind when adapting the method – **facilitator** – person who is able play at least one instrument (piano, guitar or other) and sing, **lot of different music instruments** – that could be small ukuleles, children's or animal toys that make noise, some castanets, drums etc., there is no need for professional instruments. In activity you can effectively use also toy instruments.

This activity is particularly sustainable because its engaging and involve participants quickly become much more active and open. And if you buy music instruments and tools, you can use them in plenty of other occasions and animations.

Music therapy can be done in Social Care centers, in small communities, in villages, in seniors universities, in seniors NGOs. Activity stimulates social integration and arises happiness and fun which make society more inclusive.

Learning outcomes: increase wellbeing, increase integration in local group, socialization, feeling useful, self-esteem, etc.

Main impact will be in communities that are related with social care centers – clients, workers and relatives. The method has a great impact on the elderly, but it is also perfect for working with children, people with intellectual disabilities and other social groups at risk of social marginalization due to low social competences.

Who is aimed at?

Main aim of that kind activities is activization, motivation and socialization of elderly persons and people having trouble with social contacts. This activity help take together all inhabitants of social care center and give them positive emotions and socialization. Method can be easily used in Seniors organization, Social care centers, schools, kindergartens etc. It can be used for the wider community or to specific groups, villages, NGOs, etc.

How is it organized?

It is very simple – You only need an animating person who will engage participants to play and sing together. Participants receive various instruments - the real ones and the toy ones - there is no need for everyone to be able to play them - what counts is having fun and sharing the joy of music together. You don't need to put much effort into moderating the action, because usually everyone is happy to join in the singing. Of course it is important to bring the songs that everybody knows and likes! This will bring people together and make them feel safe in the group.

Are there any risks or challenges

The biggest challenge is to find the right person to run the activity, because he need to know how to play music instrument and sing while encouraging participants to join the choir.

REGIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

What is it?

Everybody can join in non-formal education. It is never too late! In our Regional Education Center we have 6 non-formal education programs: Study of local history, Study of computer and Internet I, Study of computer and internet II, E-service and e-commerce options, Electronic resources and information searching, Media literacy.

From September to May it is possible to participate in our programs for free. Programs are available and customized for different audience – seniors, employees, students and others. We work in small groups are (5 – 8 people) which makes possible to work individually with participants.

We teach how to use modern technologies in practice, so that they are not only a source of entertainment but also a tool that facilitates life in the modern world. We show various IT applications, we show how to safely navigate the Internet, do shopping or use an online bank account.

In one group we try to bring together people from different social groups – youth, seniors adults, etc. Participants not only learn new skills but can share problems, help each other or simply discuss together about topics that are interesting for them. Through joint learning, participants establish new relationships, integrate and often undertake joint activities or simply meet each other outside of training. The result of the action is therefore not only an increase in the level of key competences, but also social skills and integration.

Learning outcomes: communication, cooperation, information searching, inspiration, positive thinking, shared support, team work, new IT skills

Who is aimed at?

All adults can participate as long as they want to learn new skills – seniors, students, unemployed, employees etc.

How is it organized?

The most important thing is a place equipped with computers and Internet access. It is important to choose a place - one where people - including seniors - often visit and where they feel safe. The lecturer must be familiar with the world of modern technologies and navigate the Internet freely. It is important that the work takes place in small groups, thanks to which the teacher will be able to answer the questions of each participant and devote maximum attention to them.

Are there any risks or challenges

The challenge is to identify the actual needs of the participants and adjust the program of activities to them. The goal is to learn skills that will be useful to participants in everyday life - not everyone needs to know Excel at a high level, but it is worth showing seniors, for example, how to register with a doctor online or order shopping in an online store.

GERMANY

Polregio e.V.



Info-Point Polregio

What is it?

Info-Point Polregio - networking as the key to success. An action which primarily strengthens the social, professional and civic competences of adults, mainly Poles or newcomers in North Rhine-Westphalia. Prevention network for Poles and Europeans in North Rhine-Westphalia

Social support network for Poles and Europeans in North Rhine-Westphalia. Info-Punkt is a network of contacts, a network of questions and answers, as well as a network of advisors and experts. Finally, Info-Punkt is a network of further education and adult learning opportunities. The network's innovation lies in its multilingualism, above all the introduction of expert information in Polish into the general administrative language.

Who is it aimed at?

The idea for the project grew out of the need to support migrants of Polish origin, i.e. ultimately of European origin in North Rhine-Westphalia after 2011, due to the change of legal framework in connection with Poland's EU membership and the end of transition periods. The Info-Point grew out of the many years of emigration experience of both individuals, groups and organisation structures in North Rhine-Westphalia. The measure was aimed at adults and senior citizens, but the holistic approach to both the problem and the applicant allowed not only individual, but above all systemic problems to be identified. EU citizens do not have access to language courses in Germany and there is often no legal or other specialist advice in Polish, resulting in social problems for whole families. On the other hand, the project's clients were highly qualified people, but who had never worked in their profession because they did not have a recognised qualification. An important target group of the project was therefore public administration and politics. Another group was social and immigrant organisations, with whom a network was jointly created. The project conducted a survey of the target group, both qualitative and quantitative. The data made it possible to identify the main problem areas. The participants in the project were in a way the Polish community in Germany, because the aim of the project was the social and professional activation, in this context the stimulation of civic integration processes through social campaigns and media work.

How is it organized?

The Info-Point network is made up of counsellors, experts divided into cities, where counselling points were set up, six points were built in six cities, always in partnership with structures on the ground. The project concept was to build up public partners in a given area - in a given city. The counselling points were located in barrier-free and easily accessible places with intercultural facilities. The Info-Points provided individual counselling, training courses and workshops as well as online activities, which were always free of charge and tailored to the target group in the city. An important element of the project was, on the one hand, social media work for networking, on the other hand, individual participation in working group meetings, advocacy and the drafting of community solutions.

Are there any risks or challenges?

The biggest risk is the project-based nature of the action, the networking itself is a long-term process and the framework of a 2-year project cannot ensure continuity of action. Conducting a survey required reaching diverse social groups, and it turned out that an online survey was not a reliable tool in this case, so it was decided to conduct in-depth interviews from among the

counselling centre clients. A huge added value of the project, and at the same time a risk, was to build up a volunteer network in each city and implement tandem support. This allowed the project to reach a larger target group, but unfortunately voluntary support is not always consistent and long-term.

The dissemination of project solutions, e.g. writing templates and publications has definitely increased the reach of the activities, while at the same time many of the publications or specialised writing templates need to be continuously updated, which is of course costly. The network of experts that has been built up (lawyers, tax advisors, an accountant, a psychologist, a job coach, an educator, language teachers) continues to be a platform that works expertly to defend the rights of workers or excluded people. At the same time, the project is a resource map which is a tool for public administration and policy.

Why is it beneficial?

One of the most important successes of the project is the stimulation of activity, the networking (connection) of many actors and projects, of which the Info-Point was the source and spark. The project provided expert counselling on labour law, family benefits, disability, the school system, education, violence, homelessness and others in Polish for immigrants. Election campaigns for Integration Councils, for Poles in 4 cities, were carried out with great success. Scientific reports were produced and partnerships were established with universities in Poland and Germany. Sample documents were prepared, e.g. cancellation of services, termination notices, authorisations, court documents and others. The project's social media and website became a reliable form of professional information and a publication was written - the "ABC of Integration" guide.

The State Integration Council

What is it?

The State Integration Council of North Rhine-Westphalia is the democratically approved representative body of the integration councils in the province of North Rhine-Westphalia and represents the migrant population vis-à-vis the social majority, public administration and politics. It is a state association and advisory body.

It is the association of the municipal integration councils in North Rhine-Westphalia at the national level, which deals with the interests and problems of the local integration councils and thus the migrants and thus supports their work locally.

The National Integration Council is the only body at the state level that is elected as a result of direct democratic elections held in conjunction with municipal elections.

Who is it aimed at?

The main aim of the Council's activities is to promote integration, participation, cultural and social diversity, legal and political equality for migrants living in North Rhine-Westphalia. The Council cooperates with all institutions and organisations, state administrations and policies that feel equally bound by this principle. The State Integration Council of North Rhine-Westphalia makes an important contribution to the peaceful coexistence of migrants and other residents of North Rhine-Westphalia in a society shaped by multiculturalism and democratic values.

How is this organised?

Membership is open to all integration councils in North Rhine-Westphalia elected on the basis of § 27 of the municipal law code. Currently, 107 local integration councils are members of the organization. The members of the local integration councils vote to send delegates from their ranks to the bodies of the National Integration Council of North Rhine-Westphalia. The members of the Council are people living in North Rhine-Westphalia with an international family history. They are people of different ages and with different migration experience. They also have a variety of experiences and professional qualifications. The members of the Council draw on their professional, cultural and family experience to build a multicultural society in North Rhine-Westphalia based on mutual respect for rights and duties.

Are there any risks or challenges?

The biggest challenge is to find the right people to be elected and represent the migrants' interests in the numerous institutions and bodies in North Rhine-Westphalia. The work for this body is voluntary, the delegates receive an equivalent in the form of a per diem, which is set by the respective local structure. Not all migrants who are eligible to vote and stand for election know that they can elect their representatives to the Council and run for office themselves at the same time. Therefore, information and promotion campaigns are still needed to encourage participation in the elections. Lack of interest in electing representatives to the council is the biggest threat.

Why it is beneficial (and for whom)

It benefits first and foremost people with a migrant background because, firstly, they have a real chance to put their needs and problems on the table and, secondly, they can realistically influence decisions and policies. However, society as a whole benefits, as the Council can identify and prevent social problems that affect the general public. It is therefore a very important mediation and expert body. The Council prepares expert opinions, negotiates with politics and public

administration.

The Council's activities, both direct and indirect, affect areas of life of every social and age group - adults in access to language courses and recognition of foreign qualifications, for seniors, furthermore the promotion of anti-discrimination work, including equal access to and funding of migrant sports clubs, furthermore inter-religious dialogue and equal practice of religions with mutual acceptance. The promotion of natural multilingualism among children, the teaching of the mother tongue in the school system and much more is a constant feature of the Council's activities. / more information find under: <https://landesintegrationsrat.nrw/ueber-uns-2/organisationsstruktur/>

PORTUGAL

Universidade Sénior de Évora



Boardgammers group

What is it?

The Boardgammers group of Évora is a group of people who play board games in this club on Tuesdays and Saturdays for communication, for better living and for development of strategies. They have all fun during the games. People meet each other to play boardgames and to communicate. It is a great method for reducing marginalization as that it can be inclusive and opened to all persons, from all backgrounds and ages. This activity can bring people together for enjoyment, education and stimulation and has proved very popular, particularly at the library, where parents come in with their children to take part.

Board games of various levels of difficulty and financial outlay are readily available, easily stored and can be played anywhere and anytime. Once the games have been purchased, the costs are negligible – just the venue is required.

This activity has a big impact in joining people together, both as a tool and a methodology.

It is :

- effective and successful, especially for elderly persons, once that they can share other common interests.
- replicable and adaptable, once that most of the games are international, so they can be used in all communities all over the world.
- economically and social sustainable once that there are different prices for different games and once you have you can play it forever.
- technically feasible, once that all games have instructions and most of them are easy to learn.
- good for brain, specially to develop strategic thinking, once you need to think about your moves on the game

Who is it aimed at?

Library users, schools, adults, senior, NGO's, private companies, etc. It can be customized for the wider community or to specific groups.

How is it organized

Boardgammers club of Évora in Level Up Gamming Lounge who develop na organize meetings every weeks that take place regularly and are often a popular activity.

Are there any risks or challenges?

The only real risk lies in the loss of pieces from games and the possible lack of participation. The biggest challenge is to find the right person to run the activity.

Why is it beneficial:

The main objective is to join people and help them to develop skills. The “so called” serious games are now used in a lot of situations to help people to create key skills like team work form example (there is a lot of games in the players doesn't play against each other but together against the game himself).

Learning outcomes: increase wellbeing, stimulate mind and thinking, team work, socializing, feeling useful, self-esteem, etc.

Peddy Paper

What is it

People use this method to get to know the city. They have a starting point, and they need to do a lot of challenges around the town. During that challenges they learn about the history of the city, and they historical buildings. The Peddy Paper is an activity that can be carried out with the support of the script on paper or with the script in digital format with the mobile phone .

If it is carried out with the support of the script in digital format, it is important to develop computer skills, because participants can check the information of the sites on the internet with the support of the mobile. In each point visited the participants have to do different things, such as taking a picture, answering a question about the location, searching for a specific place in a specific place, among others. At each point visited the participant has a task. With this activity participants can learn about the country's general history, locality history, and connect with other people. I sent in the attachment the Peddy Paper.

Could be made by big groups, that can split in small groups and divide around the city. Can be used to know a city, but also to learn about IT applications or teaching computer skills

It is:

- Replicable and adaptable, once that most of the games can be with small adjustments be used in all communities all over the world.
- Economically and social sustainable once you can used the games/tours forever with different groups.
- Technically feasible, once that all games and tours are made they can be replicable.
- Good for brain, specially to develop strategic thinking, once you need to think to solve the puzzles that appears during the games/tour.

Who is it aimed at

Children, adults, professionals, elderly (for example to help them to work with smartphones).

How is it organized

The group of articipans have a ocument, where they have the route of the Peddy Paper they must have to complete. The route is marked with a map in which each place / monumento has a diferente color, and the history of it. Each gourp can choose the point at which the route begins and ends, and when they reach the points they must answer the questions and/or challenges posed in the script.

Are there any risks or challenges

The only real risk lies in the some monumento can be closed.

Why is it beneficial

The possibility to use this to join different groups. In each group people need to work together.

Helps understanding new things for all ages: for children, youth and adults.

It can brings benefits, including wellbeing and self-esteem.

It's a good way to build groups and teams.

It's a good way to stimulate the use of new technologies.

POLAND

FOSa Federation

f e d e r a c j a
F O S a



JOB ENTERPRISE

What is it?

JOB Enterprise is a five-week program of social and professional activation, which consists in the organization of a simulated enterprise in which participants are included in a series of activities aimed at improving their professional competences and readiness to enter the labor market. During this time, program participants are included in the activities of the FOSa Federation - they are its integral organizational unit. They take an active part in all initiatives of the organization, support its employees, help with organizational and administrative matters, but are also included in its celebrations and holidays. The main task of each edition of the program is to independently plan, organize and carry out a social initiative, which is a direct result of the participants' involvement and their cooperation with the employees of the FOSa Federation.

Who is it aimed at?

The main recipient of JOB Firms are unemployed adults and young people looking for a job. However, thanks to the flexible methodology and each time the program is adapted to the needs and expectations of the group, it is perfect for working with all age groups - including people in the pre-retirement age - both uniform and those connecting generations. The program works best for people who have been outside the labor market for a long time or have no professional experience yet.

How is it organized?

For the needs of the program, a room is separated, which is an office and a daily workplace for participants of JOB Enterprise for 5 weeks. Each of them has its own place, a computer with office programs and Internet access, as well as basic office equipment. Groups consist of 5 to 10 people, depending on the size of the room and available equipment. It is important that the group consists of at least about 5 people to allow all necessary group processes to take place. The group meets 5 times a week and the working day lasts 4 hours. In order for the simulation to be real, a contract is signed with each participant, work regulations are signed and rules for working in a group are created.

Are there any risks or challenges?

It is difficult to keep participants interested and engaged for 5 weeks. The facilitators must be focused so that the group always has tasks that suit their situation and specific needs. In addition, program participants often struggle with various psychological problems, such as addictions or mental illnesses. Trainers must react quickly in a situation where, for example, a participant comes to work under the influence of alcohol, so that his condition does not have a negative impact on the rest of the group.

Why is it beneficial?

The strength of the program is primarily its length and repeatability. Thanks to daily participation in classes, participants learn the regularity necessary to take up work. People who participate in JOB Enterprise often have never worked - they do not have basic soft, social and professional competences. Thanks to the implementation of joint tasks, on the one hand, they learn the principles of proper communication, teamwork, responsibility, planning and organization skills, etc. They also learn necessary, universal professional skills, i.e. using a computer and office equipment, drawing up documents, etc. Thanks to the variety of the program o meetings with various specialists, e.g. career counselor or psychologist, they learn about their strengths, create

application documents and learn the rules of job search.

RADIO SOVO

What is it?

Radio SoVo - an activity implemented by the Social Cooperative Humanus as part of the project "SoVo - accessible internet radio" - is an adaptation of the good practice of the Polish Association for People with Intellectual Disabilities - Radio SoVo (Sound & Voices).

Radio Sovo is a project in which adults - including the elderly and people with intellectual disabilities - create a virtual internet radio. The aim of the good practice is primarily to improve the digital competences of adults. As part of the method, participants first participate in workshops during which they learn how to create video materials, acquire or improve their journalistic skills, and learn the rules of voice emission. Then, in editorial teams of 10-15 people, program participants create thematic radio programs, which are then posted on the internet platform <https://radiosovo.pl>. The topics of reports and broadcasts are diverse and depend on the interests of the editors.

Who is aimed at?

The group of recipients are adults with low digital competences. It is also perfect for working with the elderly and people with intellectual disabilities.

How is it organised?

Radio does not require a permanent base, but space for regular meetings of the editorial team is necessary. To create Internet broadcasts, you need multimedia tools, i.e. a laptop with Internet access, a video camera, a photo camera, a microphone and a voice recorder. Of course, in a situation of insufficient budget, you can limit yourself to a laptop and smartphones, which can successfully replace the above-mentioned tools.

The editorial team consists of about 10-15 people who meet min. 1 time a month. It is divided into smaller groups of 3-4 people who carry out broadcasts - these meet much more often - 1-2 times a week. Small teams collect journalistic materials - they conduct interviews, shoot videos and take photos, and then edit the broadcasts themselves, which are then sent to the main editorial office of Radio SoVo and posted on a nationwide on-line platform.

Are there any risks or challenges?

Problems that may occur during the implementation of the program are typical threats resulting from working with a group and the processes taking place in it. Differences of opinion and conflicts may occur, which the organizer / trainer must skillfully defuse in order to avoid, for example, withdrawal of participants or even resignation from joint activities.

Why is it beneficial?

Thanks to participation in the project, adults primarily and practically improve their digital competences and the ability to use modern IT technologies. However, there is a second bottom. Firstly, the participants are not only recipients, but also active and creative creators. Their activities allowed to strengthen their self-esteem and level of self-esteem. The ability to observe the effects of your own activities is also a powerful source of satisfaction. Secondly, working together in a group improves social skills, i.e. communication, cooperation, a sense of responsibility for a common goal. This eliminates the risk of deepening the social marginalization of the participants. Participation in Radio SoVo has a particularly strong impact on seniors and people with disabilities,

who, thanks to participation in the project, have a chance to improve their life situation in such key issues as effective communication with others, deepening social relationships, making independent decisions, getting out of loneliness and separation and observing the positive effects of their own activities.

ROMANIA

Asociatia Jugendzentrum Seligstadt



Training of youth leaders

What is it?

Asociatia Jugendzentrum Seligstadt is an association for children and youth, which organizes many camps for children and young adults during the summer months (June to September). In order to carry out the program in a qualitatively adequate way, it needs trained professionals and volunteers to carry out the activities with the children and youth. Once a year, during a weekend, the staff is trained in pedagogy, first aid, youth law, youth psychology, gender issues and others.

During the summer, the trained youth leaders apply what they have learned in practice by leading a group of children independently and on their own responsibility during the camps, in consultation with the team.

Who is aimed at?

This training is designed for young adults who have or would like to gain experience in children's ministry. The condition of participation is the binding commitment to lead a children's group of about 4-6 children in a workshop for at least one week. Already experienced adults (e.g. trained educators) lead groups of up to 15 children.

How is it organized?

The training is organized in collaboration with professionals from several fields. A lawyer ensures that the current juvenile law is taught, a doctor provides the first aid course, a volunteer of the association shows the pedagogical concept, a psychologist clarifies the specifics of psychology. The practical things concerning the individual workshops are taught by volunteers of the association. The following camps, the internship of the trainees, are organized by the association, which also supervises the trainees through its staff.

Are there any risks of challenges?

The challenges are to take each volunteer who is to lead a workshop fully and seriously with his or her particular characteristics and to motivate them. Since the volunteers are very different, one has to adjust to each one separately. This is not an easy task for the team, which is why daily team meetings are held with the staff.

Why is it beneficial?

Training for youth leaders is necessary because the quality of camps depends on the motivation and training of youth leaders.

Occupational Centre for people with disabilities

What is it?

At the Occupational Centre for people with disabilities, beneficiaries are given the opportunity to make simple things such as candles or small wooden objects for sale. In this way people with disabilities who have experienced marginalisation are given a useful occupation or structured day out.

The pedagogical and strategic mission is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families.

Who is aimed at?

The project is addressed to people with mental and multiple disabilities, young and adult people who cannot be employed. Most of the beneficiaries are people with social and emotional needs who require partial or total accompaniment and assistance.

How is it organized?

The Occupational Centre for People with Disabilities is a social assistance unit, which collaborates with Sibiu County Council, Sibiu General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Sibiu City Hall, Sibiu Public Social Assistance Service and Sibiu Evangelical Parish.

Are there any risks or challenges?

The general challenge lies in the difficulties of working with people, especially as the beneficiaries bring with them psychological problems that require not only a professionally correct approach but also a proper empathetic one.

Another almost daily challenge is managing the finances to meet all the needs of the work.

Why is it beneficial?

Participation in the daily life of society refers to the possibility of each person to perceive differently the roles and social contacts. People with disabilities are expected to enjoy the possibilities offered by an occupation. Through support and pedagogical assistance they will be supported in overcoming daily tasks as well as social and emotional needs. Taking their own decisions and responsibilities should thus become possible for each of them.

Part 2

GOOD PRACTICE TOOLKIT

So you want to start an activity in your own community, but are unsure of how and where to start. Here are a few ideas on how to start and maintain an activity or community group.

If you're thinking about starting up a new group or organisation in your community, this guide will help you to think about what you need to do. You might find that only some of the contents of this list applies to your group but it is useful to consider them all before you go any further.

Is this the right group for your community?

- How do you know whether there is a need for this group? What evidence do you have (survey, recent closure of similar group which was well attended, community interest).
- Is there already a group like yours? Avoid duplication and consider joining up with another group if appropriate.
- What do you aim to achieve and what impact do you want to make? This can be the mission statement for your constitution or set of rules for your group.
- What is the purpose of your group and what steps does the group need to take to help achieve this? On a standard constitution or set of rules this is often referred to as your aim and objectives.
- Who do you think it will appeal to and how will you reach them?
- Will this be a regular activity or organised at irregular intervals?
- Consider times and days of the week.
- What would be your location, and are there any costs or charges?

You - and who else?

- Establish a core group of volunteers to support the development and running of the group. Use your networks, your local volunteer recruitment website if you have one, or local newspaper/media to talk about your plans and publicise the need for volunteers.
- Meet to identify the strengths, skills and experience of the group and allocate roles appropriately.
- Delegate roles and responsibilities to avoid overloading one person; this will help to develop ownership of the group.
- Have fun sharing ideas and plans.

Do you need to find a venue for your activity? Will you meet outside or maybe in someone's home?

There are various aspects to consider:

- Heating
- Toilets
- Kitchen
- Storage space
- Good access for people with varying abilities
- Car parking
- Public transport links
- Room capacity
- Safety

If you need to hire a room, you may be able to negotiate an initial lower rent whilst the group becomes established.

Costs

Decide how much you will charge (room hire will need to be covered along with restocking materials and purchasing snacks if needed). Charging attendees a small amount from the beginning will help to make sure the group continues.

You may wish to carry out fundraising activities to cover initial set up costs.

Keeping safe

There should be a risk assessment for the building you will be using, make yourself familiar with this to ensure you and group members are aware of the fire escape procedure, first aid resources and potential hazards. Follow the guidance given to reduce the risk of harm to members of your group. It is good practice to risk assess your sessions based on the activities you will be providing, consider the risks involved and measures you can put in place to reduce these.

Before each session check the room to make sure that it is clear of harmful objects, if appropriate make sure all sockets have safety covers, that fires or heaters are behind guards and safety gates are in place. Make sure that attendees are aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures, the location of a first aid kit.

It is good practice to have a qualified first aider in attendance at each session, a fully stocked first aid box is essential. Any accident during the session will need to be recorded in an accident book. There needs to be a record of time and type of injury, name of person, first aid given and if a trip to the doctor or hospital was recommended. It needs to be signed by the individual themselves or the parent/carer to show that they are happy with what is recorded.

Keep an attendance register of who attends each session – this is good practice and will enable you to make sure everyone is accounted for if there is an evacuation or emergency, it will also give you an idea of group numbers each week.

If you take photographs during the session you will need permission from the person you are taking the photograph of (parental permission for children under 16 years). This can be done through a photo consent form from parents/ carers/individuals and clear agreement on how the photographs will be used.

It is a good idea for all members of the group to complete a simple registration form. This could include details such as:

- name
- child's name (if appropriate)
- child's date of birth (if appropriate)
- address
- contact telephone number
- emergency contact number/ next of kin contact number
- medical conditions (including allergies)
- specific needs
- signature of parent/carer/attendee
- date of joining

If you are taking a group of young people on a trip or involving them in an activity, then you will need to consider a parental consent form.

All forms could include a data protection declaration and a photo consent option. It should state

how the information supplied will be stored/used and who will have access to it. The person completing the form must give written consent for the information to be used in the ways stated. Keeping contact details up to date will ensure you can keep in touch with those who attend and let everyone know if you make changes or decide to offer additional sessions. All information you hold should be kept securely.

Must dos

If your group involves working with children and vulnerable adults you will need facilitators who have been checked or vetted for a criminal record; in the UK this is the DBS check (the Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service).

Your safeguarding procedures for protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults need to be clear to all. Your group must also have a current child protection and/or vulnerable adult policy in place. The policy needs to be reviewed on an annual basis. Having the policy in place supports the safety and protection of both volunteers, children and vulnerable adults. A copy of the policies should be made available or displayed clearly whilst the group is in session and all members should be made aware of it.

You will need to ensure you have appropriate insurance in place. Have a discussion with the venue providers as this may be covered by the policy for the building or you may need to purchase this specifically for your group's needs.

You need to ensure that your group is operating in a fair and non-discriminatory way so it's advisable to put in place a clear policy that outlines your group's statement regarding equality and diversity.

Check that any new activities introduced in your group are covered by your insurance. You might find that certain activities are required to be delivered by a qualified person; e.g. if providing sporting/physical activities, serving hot food etc.

Planning your sessions

The key to creating a successful group is to be inclusive and make everyone feel welcome. Many people who feel isolated in their communities will welcome the support and friendship that your group can offer.

Consider the layout of the room e.g. what will allow everyone to communicate easily for example for a seniors group who meet for board games will need several tables each with 4 or 6 chairs, and the ability to make smaller or larger groups. Have an area devoted to comfortable seating for those who wish to sit and chat rather than play board games. Consider asking group members to help with tidying up puzzles and games at the end of a session.

A welcome pack containing the terms and conditions of your group could be useful as it will enable you to set out clear guidelines, for example you may wish to set out how members of the group are expected to treat each other, in line with your Equalities and Diversity policy.

Try to structure your sessions and plan them in advance.

You may wish to invite outside organisations to talk to your group and share information.

Most groups offer refreshments (ensure all hot drinks are made and drunk away from young children).

The most important thing that you and your group need to remember is to have fun.

Roles and responsibilities

Your group will need a set of rules or Governing Document so that everyone knows: What your group is called, what it aims to do, how your group will be run and who is responsible for the running. The normal governing document for a small group is called a constitution and is often needed to apply for grants and funding.

Once your group has agreed and signed your constitution, it is a legal document.

The committee, not the group members, will be personally responsible for making sure the rules are followed.

Committee run groups are usually groups run by the community for the community. The members will form a committee that meets on a regular basis. Committees will often have a number of elected people on them such as a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and committee members. It is a good way to share the workload and can make the decision making process easier.

You will need to agree as a group how often the committee will meet to discuss how the group is running and where improvements can be made. You might wish to consider holding an Annual General Meeting (AGM) so that the membership of the committee can be reviewed if needed.

As your group develops you may decide to adapt your group into some sort of charitable structure.

There are different structures you can choose and your committee members and group participants will need to agree which one is right for you.

Managing money and ongoing funding

Running any group costs money and it's a good idea to start thinking at the beginning about where to get it from and how to look after it. As soon as your group has some money you will need to identify one person who will take responsibility for keeping track of it (the treasurer). However, it's important to remember that all your committee members hold overall responsibility of your group's money.

Having a bank account is the best way to make sure the group's money is kept safely. Many banks offer special accounts for community groups. You will need to have at least two members of the group willing to act as signatories. Funders usually require that you have a bank account where each cheque has to be signed by two people.

You might want to consider applying for external grants and funding for your group.

Find out about current information on the different sorts of monies available and how to apply.

Keeping your group going

Ensure your group is well publicised through methods which best suit the people who are likely to attend. Create posters to display in the locality to advertise the activities, and if budget allows, small flyers or leaflets. Inform the local newspaper giving plenty of notice of the activities and make full use of social media such as Facebook and the local government website.

Organising fundraising events will enable you to tell the community about your group and what

you offer along with raising funds.

Volunteers will be more likely to stay if you can offer relevant training and ongoing support. There may be a course that they can access for free.

You may wish to create an online group (e.g. on Facebook) to help coordinate activities/events and send out automatic reminders.

Ensure your group organisers/committee meet on a regular basis to oversee, plan, evaluate and review all the activities of the group. It's important to record decisions made at these meetings as well as noting the names of people who have agreed to carry out any actions.

It's important to remember that people involved in groups do come and go. Having new people get involved brings in new ideas and different ways of doing things.

Meeting on a regular basis will ensure that new ideas and suggestions can be discussed and the development and smooth running of the group will continue.

Consider using "regional" coordinators, who are responsible for informing people in their immediate neighbourhood by phone or in person. The coordinators meet frequently to discuss and plan their activities.

PARTNERS IN THE 'KEY SKILLS - NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS' PROJECT ARE:

FOSa FEDERATION

FOSa Federation aims to solve social problems through mutual support and representation of around 100 social organizations in the local region. FOSa works to represent its member organizations and support social and community organisations through training in project management, fundraising and project writing; counselling for NGO employees and volunteers and organising conferences and seminars. Their core area of expertise is in the elderly and people with disabilities.

SENIOR UNIVERSITY EVORA

The Senior University of Evora, which operates in a city of around 55,000 people, is a private, non profit association that develops non formal educational activities for people over 50 years of age. The main aim of the organisation is to improve the lives of older people, to promote active aging and intergenerational relations; to run training, learning and social activities for seniors and promote volunteering.

<https://universidade-senior-de-evora6.webnode.pt/>

POLREGIO e.V.

Info-Point Polregio e.V. is a network of social structures in NRW and sees itself as a representation of interests for migrants of Polish descent in NRW, among others. Based on the fact that opportunities for participation are often limited in the context of society as a whole, the professionals working in the Info-Point Polregio fields of work act with an understanding of professional strategies for exerting influence in order to assert the rights of Poles in Germany.

<https://www.facebook.com/infopoint.polregio>

GULBENES NOVADA PAŠVALDĪBA

Gulbene municipality (GM) is allocated in the North – East of Latvia in a remote and sparsely populated area. Territory of municipality consists of 13 villages and Gulbene city administrative territory. The administrative center of the municipality is city Gulbene with ~ 8000 inhabitants, located 186km from capital Riga. The total number of inhabitants in Gulbene Municipality is ~ 20 000. GM initiates different social, educational, project etc. activities that fall in line with the development plans of its territory and address needs of the different local population groups. GM also renders support to the different population groups including youth, seniors, disabled and disadvantaged people to help them carry out their ideas and ambitions to improve quality of life and to facilitate their active civil participation.

ASOCIATIA JUGENDZENTRUM SELIGSTADT, I.E. THE

Seligstadt Youth Center, deals with activities not only for young people, but also for adult residents of Seligstadt. In Seligstadt, an abandoned rectory - a fortified fortress from the 12th century was renovated and turned into a youth hostel, while the church and bell tower are preserved and active religious use. This process was aimed at social revitalization. Thanks to these activities, local residents - residents excluded by the system, the unemployed, people with alcohol and other problems - received support in the form of training and professional preparation, many of them found a job, e.g. in a youth hostel. Cultural managers, teachers, animators, musicians, academics, etc. are permanently involved in the work of the association. The Association organizes seminars on the renovation of monuments and the protection of cultural and natural monuments, ecological seminars, as well as seminars on prevention, e.g. anti-drug seminars, events in the field of ecology, history, social participation and volunteering.

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