

REPORT

TRAINING SEMINARS IN THE PROJECT

“PROMOTING ACTIVE INCLUSION OF DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET”

Three training seminars were implemented on 4th, 5th and 7th of July, 2017, in Hotel Porta, Skopje, from 10:00 until 17:00.

1. CONTENT OF THE TRAINING SEMINARS

- Introduction of the project, trainer, the agenda and participants.
- Short introduction of social mentorship
- Benefits and possible challenges in implementation
- Positive practices (case studies)
- Conclusions

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE TRAINING SEMINARS

During the implementation of the training seminars it was used the non-formal methodology. The participants had an opportunity to be involved in activities that secured their active involvement and sharing of their knowledge, skills and experience and as well building new competencies while being engaged in active learning (applying the learning-by-doing approach). There were used variety of methods: brainstorming, small group work activities, open discussions, team-building activities, interactive presentations etc. In the following it will be presented in greater detail one of the method that was quite effective and served the purpose of the seminar, the world-coffee method. It is an easy-to-use method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in service to real work. It is also a provocative metaphor enabling us to see new ways to make a difference in our lives and work. The power of conversation is so invisible and natural that we usually overlook it. For example, consider all the learning and action choices that occur as people move from one conversation to another inside our organizations and communities.

The World Café process is valuable and the related benefits:

- **Connect across**– One of the biggest challenges is that organizations and larger systems are siloed: people work in the same organization/community/system or on the same issue, yet they don't talk to each other or understand how their work or issues relate. World Café enables people from these “fragmented” parts of a community/system to meet and get to know each other and deepen their understanding of other parts of the system/issue.
- **Build a foundation of trust for collaboration** – Establishing relationships and building trust are foundations of building interest and willingness of people to collaborate from various departments, organizations, or parts of a community. Building a relationship starts in conversation – in talking and listening. The small group format of World Café offers the space for deeper conversations and story telling.
- **A taste of collaboration's benefits** – Participants get to experience a small taste of emergence, one of the benefits of collaboration, where my idea can combine with your idea to create something new.
- **Planting seeds** – You never know where the seeds from any one of the many conversations and new connections will take root.
- **A different way of learning** – Often we think of education and learning in the model of a teacher or expert at the front of a room sharing information to an audience of students, e.g., Powerpoint slide shows. The World Café offers a way to practice collective learning, surfacing and synthesizing the collective experience of people in the room to gain new insight, while also providing a way for each individual to learn and make unique connections relevant to their work. Learning comes from having the space to reflect on one's experience and hear about others.

3. Information about the groups of participants

The groups were consisted of members of different target groups. In each of the groups there were representatives from the:

- Business sector
- Centers for social work
- Agency for employment
- Civil society organizations
- Unemployed citizens

All of the participants were very enthusiastic and participative during the training seminars. Even though they had different level of previous knowledge and experience and the level of sharing information was different among them, the current situation was transformed into an opportunity, especially with the use of the world- coffee method. In the framework of which there were exchanged deferent perspectives on the following issues:

- What are the challenges in the implementation of the social mentorship in Macedonia (described from the perspective of each involved sector)?
- What are the challenges in the implementation of the social mentorship in Macedonia (described from the perspective of each vulnerable group)?
- What are the necessary knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that social mentors must obtain in order to work successfully with each vulnerable group?

In addition, the participants were included in exercises during which they were able to practice resolving certain case studies which were prepared for them previously. This was an excellent opportunity for them to practice working together and to experience the process and dynamics of resolving almost real situations. The case studies gave them chance to become aware of the most important components that can secure successful implementation of the social mentorship as a concept, and those are the following: trust, cooperation, direct, open and constructive communication.

4. Recommendations identified by the participants

During the group work activities, implemented on the seminars, the participants gave lot of recommendations for improvement. In the following it will be presented the most important ones:

- There is a need for revision of the administrative job responsibilities of the social workers which are involved as social mentors. They are required to perform a lot of administrative work and as a result they lack of sufficient quality time for mentoring and that has major influence on the quality of their work as social mentors.
- The Agency for employment needs to implement effective dissemination of all the activities/opportunities (free courses, trainings, mentorship etc.) in order for the unemployed citizens to receive the information and have the chance to use it.
- Centers for social work must be focused on providing psychological support to the representatives of the vulnerable groups, not just on providing some financial support.

- Centers for social work and Agency for employment have to improve their everyday cooperation and communication.
- Centers for social work and Agency for employment have to merge their database information and use it together.
- There is a need for standardization of the work performed in each Center for social work in our country. Some of them are working with more advanced approaches than the others.
- The communication with the business sector must be improved in order to be identified their challenges and modified the social mentorship, their needs need to be met and the real threats answered.
- Social mentors must continue with the mentoring process even when the representatives of the vulnerable groups manage to find an employment in order for them to receive the needed guidance at this period so they can remain being employed and develop accordingly.

5. Recommendations identified by the trainer

In the following it will be presented certain recommendations that may secure better inclusion of the vulnerable groups on the labor market:

- There is a need for official acceptance and recognition of the social mentorship by the Ministry of labor and social policy.
- In addition, action plan should be developed. Analyzes of the situation in the centers for social work need to be done. Concrete and necessary steps should be determine in order to create conditions for future social mentors to work with full enthusiasm and involvement.
- There is a need for popularization of the social mentorship as appropriate approach for increasing the employment in our country.
- There are some other approaches (carrier mentors etc.) which are active or half active on the field. They should be analyzed, similarities should be determined and transition program should be developed. All of the trained staff should use the social mentorship approach.
- People who will be involved as social mentors must be involved by their choice not because somebody decided to involve them. Their personal motivation is very important for successfulness of the process.

- Joint teambuilding and strategic planning activities must be realized for the Centers for social work and Agency for employment. In addition, protocols for daily coordination should be developed.
- Social mentors must go through intensive training of different topics: problem solving thinking, stress management, coaching, conflict management, time management, motivation etc. In addition, they need to have their own mentors who will provide guidance and support in the process of becoming great social mentors.
- In those trainings companies should be invited to delegate people from their HR departments. They will be prepared to work with representatives from the vulnerable groups and to cooperate with social mentors and the involved institutions in the process.
- Continuous sessions for improvement of the skills and regular meetings between all of the involved parts in the process must happen (once or twice a month). Their aim will be to make reflection on the challenges during the implementation and to develop joint strategies and approaches for resolving those challenges.

5. Final conclusion

The seminars were implemented successfully. The aims and objectives were reached. Participants were fully involved and were motivated and inspired to use the social mentorship as a tool for improving the employment in our country. Challenges were determined and put on paper. The process of building better cooperation and improvement of the mutual trust also happened during the seminars. Small successes were shared and celebrated. All of the participants agreed that social mentorship is a great approach for improving the inclusion of the disadvantaged people in the labor market in our country. It will be important to have follow up project which will upgrade the reached success and work on full development of the social mentorship as official approach in our system for increasing the employability in our country.

Trainer

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