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AAR

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Executive Summary

The progress report is aimed at informing interested parties, stakeholders and possible participants.

The objectives are to attract and retain adults who have educational disadvantages to return to education and to help them become successful learners by implementing measures aimed at retaining them in adult education programmes by using adult learners as ambassadors. This will be carried out at adult education centres in Sweden, Lithuania, Ireland and The Netherlands. These organisations worked with their own students and outside expertise to realise this project.

The methodologies carried out to produce the handbook were the production of flexible models for the training and utilisation of ambassadors in many different contexts.

The major results of this training to date have been that many ambassadors have developed new skill sets, grown in confidence and have positively influenced new students to participate and remain in a process of life long learning.

The plan for the future is that the programme becomes self sustaining and the process of training ambassadors will be on going and will be refined.

Details of the web site are available at www.attractandretain.eu This is currently in the developmental stages.

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1. Project Objectives

Description of the project objectives.

A number of innovative educational models will be developed, piloted, refined and disseminated, and learners from the target groups will be recruited and retained, and will achieve greater self-esteem, new qualifications, access to further education and training and/or employment.

These target groups are immigrants and refugees, second chance adult learners, early school leavers and learners with low levels of literacy.

Aims:

To create an incentive to a Europe wide plan to combat consequences of educational disadvantages in adults

To train successful students as ambassadors in attracting educationally disadvantaged adults who lack the confidence to return to learning

To achieve the social inclusion of educationally disadvantaged adults, and to invigorate their interest in learning, improving their basic skills

To increase current adult learners' skills and self-esteem levels, providing opportunities to acquire better oral communication and presentation skills in an ambassador training programme, and allowing students to be perceived as role models

To prevent adult education students from dropping out by using ambassadors to retain and motivate students whose fears may cause them to leave programmes.

To create and evaluate a systematic model for using ambassadors to promote education and training to disadvantaged adults

To enable organisations to motivate different target groups for making behavioural changes by creating a model that is transferable, this model could be used in any situation where people have thresholds to conquer or where behavioural change is desired. Ambassadors can be used as an incentive in these cases. Examples include reorganisation programmes where companies may find it hard to motivate employees to participate

To encourage teachers/tutors, adult education centres, and other organisations to adopt and promote this model

Objectives:

To recruit at least 45 ambassadors.

To use these ambassadors in at least 80 predetermined activities per country per year.

To develop an ambassador training programme, representing at least 25 guided learning hours, designed to increase students' oral communication and presentation skills.

To develop, record and publish models for the ways to use ambassador presentations as stimulus for learning, in the shape of a toolkit (handbook and cd) and an analysis report,

To record at least 2 case studies per partner and note the added value of the programmes in the participating countries;

To train at least 2 ambassador trainers for each of the partners in the project

To create a website that supports the work of the project and that will enable the effective dissemination of project outcomes

To disseminate the outcomes of the project to at least one other partner in each of the four countries and in 4 other countries, and to at least 2 non-educational organisations per partner.

2. Project Approach

A number of training programs for ambassadors and mentors have been developed by individual tutors, carried out and have been refined throughout the course of the project. The testing of these models is on-going and flexible and transferable between the different centers involved in the project. The sharing of learning assignments and ideas has been very productive and inspirational. These new practical ideas have been carried out and modified in all the partner organizations.

The pedagogical approaches varied from creative group work to reflective practice and andragogy. Cultural, social and intellectual diversity also played an important role in our approaches which required sensitivity in the planning and delivery of the training.

Feedback from the students involved in the project was paramount in the evaluation of the project results. Those involved in the ambassador project are very positive about the contribution it makes to their communication skills and their personal development. Students who were initially exposed to the ambassador speeches reported that they found it very encouraging and inspiring.

The ambassador project has been adapted to function as part of existing accreditation processes within the partner organizations and within national systems. Assessment can be by portfolio, e-portfolio, self directed and flexible assessment tests and certification

This is a project where the students are at the centre, their process of self actualization and personal growth is paramount. All students involved speak of this:

“ The world has become a bigger place”

“ I have something to say and people will listen”

“ My secret is out.. and I am free.”

“ Helping others makes me feel good; it contributes to my personal growth and gives a sense of self realization”

Information regarding the ambassador project has been disseminated to the partners' local press. Ambassadors spoke on local radio and television and reached a larger audience. Information was also disseminated to Social Workers, Police Liaison officers, Social Welfare Offices, Health Centres, Factories, Local Government and so on.

Dissemination is crucial to the lifespan of the project in that the idea of “word of mouth” is often the best method of attracting potential students. Dissemination will ensure that the ambassador idea will be taken up by adult education centers in different countries and other organizations and companies. Identification with another person's story or life journey is a key factor in allowing a potential student to access life long learning.

Every student who has undertaken the ambassador/mentor process will carry their knowledge, skills and growth at a personal and interpersonal level into all aspects of their life and future learning paths.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

67 ambassadors and 8 mentors were recruited in all. 37 ambassadors and 8 mentors have been trained to become an ambassador/mentor.

These ambassadors engaged in a number of predetermined activities.

A variety of ambassador training programmes were undertaken which increased students' oral communication and presentation skills. We have developed a training programme in media and audio visual skills. The ambassadors have achieved competence in participating in the media world, even in the national media. This is a big achievement for anybody, it takes courage and skill.

We developed, recorded and shared models for the ways to use ambassador presentations as stimulus for learning.

We made a DVD bringing together stories from all the partner organizations.

The ambassador model has had an organic growth process. It has developed in a natural way through the sharing of experience. It will continue to reach new target groups through the ambassadors themselves. Other tutors and partner organizations can quickly see the potential and flexible use of the model and can transfer and adapt it according to their needs. It is like a snowball!

“snöbollseffekten” “sneeuwbaaleffect” “sniego kamuolys”

We have used the case studies and student stories in the creation of the brochure, handbook and DVD.

The handbook has been created. It is a practical tool for any organization or individual as it contains lesson plans and learning activities it also links to the website (www.attractandretain.eu) with more ideas and detailed lessons.

We commenced training at least 2 ambassador trainers for each of the partners in the project.

A website (www.attractandretain.eu) that supports the work of the project was created.

Dissemination has happened through conferences, the media, with talks to other education professionals, other professionals such as health workers, charitable organizations, factories, government (local and national) and non-governmental organizations. This is an ongoing process. This has happened within the partner countries and in other European nations. It is project without borders.

4. Partnerships

The partners come from various different regions (Lithuania, Ireland, Sweden and The Netherlands) and have given the project many dimensions which are consequently adaptable to many different European countries.

The experience of working with European countries has been inspiring and emphasises our common experience of European citizenship. The project is an open and inclusive learning experience for all the partners.

All participants have gained a deeper understanding of the structures of education systems in the partner countries. We have different target groups and methods of recruitment but what is clear is that the model is adaptable in every country. A deeper understanding and knowledge is gained at all levels of involvement in the project. The students can also have a varied experience and try new approaches alongside their teachers. The sharing of ideas improves the skills in our everyday practice. It leads to a open and flexible learning environment.

Sharing this process with other organizations such as a charity or health professionals has resulted in our partners having a wider and more inclusive approach. As adult educators who work with disadvantaged learners we have a clearer way to speak about what we do and others can understand how to connect with our organizations.

5. Plans for the Future

The project has gone according to plan and we are delighted with the outcome.

We have made a toolkit. This toolkit contains a brochure, DVD and a handbook with links to the website. We can use it within our own organizations to inspire new ambassadors and teachers. Our future plan is to share this with other organizations showing them how to work with ambassadors.

The brochure will be available in the partner languages. This brochure gives a brief description or overview of the project and can be shared with other adult education organizations in each partner country. It can also be distributed to other organizations.

We have made a DVD. This shows the ambassadors activities and progress in all the partner countries. It can encourage people to return to education. It can explain the project and can help others to become ambassadors.

We made a handbook with an introduction and four chapters: a motivation section, recruitment and selection of the ambassadors, training of an ambassador or mentor, activities of the ambassadors and mentors. This handbook has an appendix with details of the accreditation system of ambassadors, agreement, case studies, certificate, the use of (E) -portfolio and a glossary of terms. This handbook will be distributed in all partner countries in English and translations will be available as copies and as online content via the website.

The impact of the ambassador model will be closely monitored by each of the centres in the future so that we can provide the project with more quantitative data at any time.

All partners are following the progress of past ambassadors who have moved beyond our organizations. We are aware that more students are joining the organizations because they have encountered an ambassador and that this process has a wider reach than when it was just an informal process. We will measure this when students make an initial application and will collect this data.

The Lithuania partner have already started to train new ambassadors

The Swedish partners are implementing the training of ambassadors into other programmes such as health care. And they wanted to set up a special day with certification for ambassadors after the training.

The Netherlands are testing and refining the mentor training process with another organization CINOP

6. Contribution to EU policies

The project has created, tested, evaluated and refined a model in a number of countries that it is transferable throughout Europe. The results in different countries have shown that the product has profited from knowledge gained from ambassadors working in different cultural contexts.

All of the partner countries have identified added values in pilot projects and these added values can be used by other partners. The development of e- portfolio, media skills training and the development of self esteem and self actualization has been a direct additional benefit.

The adult education students acting as ambassadors participating in the project feel they are part of a European network of national adult education ambassadors. Through making presentations and the DVD student ambassador involvement in the project has promoted the idea of European citizenship among educationally disadvantaged adults, as they have become an important part of a European group.

Open learning environment (E19)

There is an open learning environment. The age of the population of this project is between 21 and 64 and they participate in education and training.

Communication in the mother language (KC1)

The target group will learn to express themselves better in their native language. Improving writing skills will allow those taking part in the project to participate better in public life, and increase their opportunities for further training and employment. Learning to speak in public will allow the participants to stimulate others to make that step possible as well. Accessing media skills connects our disadvantaged learners with the wider community.

Horizontal policies (c.4)

The adult target group is disadvantaged as far as basic skills are concerned. Increasing basic skills levels will allow them to participate in other types of education and will promote their chances of finding employment. By training and using ambassadors as a resource, adult education will become more accessible for others.

Dissemination and exploitation of results (KA4)

Successful students in basic skills programmes will be trained to become ambassadors. This will allow them to tell their story and share their life and educational experiences with others. Ambassadors will hold presentations about their experiences, e.g. in companies, neighbourhood centres, or on radio programmes. They will coach other students in adult education programmes. In this way, they will help disaffected adults to re-engage in basic skills training programmes and increase their chances on the labour market.

7. Extra Heading/Section

