



Local Discussion Groups – Global Report

Y.U.S.S. – Addressing Youth Unemployment through Soft Skills Coaching Programmes

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1. Introduction

This document has been written for the multilateral project “Y.U.S.S. – Addressing Youth Unemployment through Soft Skills Coaching Programmes” (2011-1-ES1-LEO05-35958) funded by the action Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of Innovation within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

It presents the results and recommendations of the Local Discussion Group, involving different stakeholders. All projects partner in Spain, Portugal, Germany, France, Bulgaria and Austria formed separate Local Discussion Groups and elaborated reports on their work.

These recommendations will help to adapt the final products according to the needs and requirements in the relevant national context.

The Local Discussion Groups provide a good opportunity to work in close co-operation with different stakeholders on the local level which is also a step towards successfully implement the Y.U.S.S. methodology and tools in all project countries.

2. Local Discussion Groups in all countries

Local Discussion Groups were established in Spain, Germany, France, Bulgaria and Austria involving e.g. staff members from partner organisations, young unemployed people, local employers, training institutions and human resources managers.

The partner institutions organised different Round Tables in order to receive as much information and recommendations as possible from the Local Discussion Groups. However, all partners had agreed to refer to same questions. This is the reason why the global results will follow this structure of questions.

In the following please find the results of these discussions in the different countries Spain, Germany, France, Bulgaria and Austria.

3. Overview of Round Table Discussion in all countries

Local Discussion Groups	
Place	Madrid (Spain)
Date	7 March 2013
Participants	2 labour market insertion advisors 3 trainers/coaches
Dates	13 May 2013
Participants	2 labour market insertion advisors 3 trainers/coaches
Place	Cham, Germany
Date	25 April 2013
Participants	3 labour market insertion advisors 2 trainers/coaches 2 job-seeking young persons 2 members of YUSS project team
Date	14 May 2013
Participants	2 labour market insertion advisors 1 trainers/coaches 2 job-seeking young persons 3 members of YUSS project team

Local Discussion Groups	
Place	Bastia, France *
Date	21 March 2013
Participants	2 coaches 2 trainer 1 member of YUSS project team
Date	6 May 2013
List of participants	2 coaches 3 trainers 3 stakeholders (trainers/coaches) 1 member of YUSS project team
Place	Sofia, Bulgaria **
Date	8 February 2013
Participants	2 psychologist and trainers 1 member of YUSS project team
Date	23 May 2013
Participants	1 psychologist and trainers 2 psychologist 1 trainer 1 member of YUSS project team
Place	Graz, Austria
Date	10 February 2013
Participants	3 trainers 2 members of YUSS project team
Date	26 April 2013
Participants	3 trainers 3 participants of training 2 members of YUSS project team

Additional information for France*:

Three organizations were invited to be acknowledged about the activities of YUSS project and to work in tight collaboration with IDF in order to guarantee a good transfer/adaptation of the YUSS products:

Sud Concept is a cooperative for employment which leads in Corsica, research, support actions and training in partnership with French authorities and offices related Insertion and Employment

Etudes et Chantiers Corsica is a non-profit association (law 1901); its activities are dedicated to socio-professional inclusion through economic activity and operates in study, animation and implementation of workshops and inclusion work camps

Couveuse d'entreprise Corse is a business incubator that aims to promote the economic initiative, including by allowing project managers to create business scale testing the economic feasibility of their project while learning responsibility for their own activity and to better understand the functions of the entrepreneurs in real situations.

Additional information for Bulgaria:**

The Bulgarian project partner BDA works in collaboration with two psychologists that participate in transfer and adaptation of the YUSS products.

Dimitry Ganchev is a school psychologist and he is well aware of the difficulties that young people face in their everyday life. His work is aimed at helping young people adapt in different settings like peers, family, friends, and school. In other words, he is in touch with many young people and he fosters development of their basic skills. His major roles and functions as practicing school psychologist include psychoeducational assessment, consultation and interventions. Both coaches, Dimitry and Nina, have experience in helping young unemployed people develop their soft skills.

The Local Discussion Group decided that the most appropriate target group for the piloting experience would be high school students (boys and girls under the age of 18) since they are young unemployed people and they need to improve their soft skills. Dimitry, the school psychologist, invited a young person he consults to attend the piloting.

4. Usefulness of Y.U.S.S. methodology for development soft skills among young unemployed

4.1. Practical Guide

The practical guide was **in general positively assessed** by the experts throughout all countries participating in the Local Discussion Groups (LDG).

The Spanish LDG pointed out that contents are **clear and helpful**, German LDG found it **very informative**, in particular as it was already available in German.

In the second Local Discussion group meeting in Germany, after the piloting, there was also feedback from the piloting VET trainers. The practical guide, in general, was appreciated as a **suitable tool with interesting exercises** in order to make learners aware of certain skills/lack of certain skills. There is a **variety of exercises** which also can be adapted to the needs of the special group of learners with respect to their age, level of education, etc. The first part of the manual which is dedicated to the general topic of coaching can either serve as information for new coaches or for a self-reflection purpose for experienced coaches.

In France the LDG participants appreciate having a practical guide in order to have a **clear idea about the identification/definition of social skills, the methodologies and guidelines** to follow in order to implement the necessary activities. This practical guide therefore was useful.

In Bulgaria the LDG participants found the practical guide **very useful** since it offers:

- General idea of functions and roles of a coach
- Self-evaluation tools
- Guidelines for being an effective coach (practitioners and beginners)
- Guidelines and specific steps for coaching a team
- Important guidelines to evaluate results
- Explanation of the coaching process
- Practical tips for drawing a coaching session plan

The practical guide was discussed during both LDG meetings in Austria. In general it has to be said that all the trainers of the Austrian LDG agreed in saying that the manual is a very good tool to be used by the trainers in order to change the normal way of working.

Most part of the **critics** in Spain came with the ACRO methodology. Some experts believed that many young people actually do not have objectives and that putting them at the base of the pyramid is not very useful. Instead they proposed to start working with them with motivations that would end up becoming more sharp and focused objectives in a more advantaged stage of the process.

4.2. Skills Methodology adapted to Y.U.S.S.

4.2.1. Soft Skill 1: Ability to adapt to the organizational environment:

In this soft skill the experts in Spain highlighted the **need of working not only the adaptability but also, the resilience**. Adaptability may have a pejorative meaning i.e., being adaptable to the needs of an external person / organisation may bring about disempowerment for young unemployed as opposed to resilience which means being resistant and flexible at the same time.

In Germany, the skill, itself, is stated to be **very important for young low-educated people** when entering an enterprise as many of them **lack this skill also in terms of politeness, punctuality**, etc. With reference to the corresponding practical guide exercise (Fairy-tales in a new guise) and the piloting experience it was mentioned that a **great part of the exercise had to be dedicated to the explanation and interpretation** of the fairy-tale as many participants were **low-educated or had a migrant background**. Once they understood what to do, they appreciated this kind of exercise and drew very creative posters. The general concern in the German LDG was stated that in order for Y.U.S.S. to have successful exercises for coaches **it is important to explain to the participants what the exercises stand for** in order to not let them forget that this is not just an enjoyable way of learning units but it also stands for improving certain individual soft skills.

In France, four activities were defined in order to develop this skill category considered as **very important in order to facilitate the integration on the labour market**:

- 1 of the activities was presented in the manual
("fairy tales in new guise" was chosen from the initial practical guide and adapted to our public)
- and 3 of them were proposed by the LDG participants *(Within this category, participants note that the ability to respects the hierarchal relations was evaluated with a median value of 17,50 (cf. results obtained in the WP2). Thereby, they agree to introduce one activity dedicated to this skill)*

The **Bulgarian participants** in group discussion chose the exercise presented in the coaching manual called “fairy tales in new guise” as it requires team work, cooperation and collaboration with other team members; adapting to their needs and ideas. Coachers decided **to add a new element** to that exercise: after transforming the fairy tales „The Princess And The Pea“ and „The Magic Porridge Pot“, participants were asked to present the fairytale using drawings and/ or theatre playing. Coachers proposed this exercise “Making a scene representing a given situation and playing it (for individual or group work)” as it also requires cooperation and ability to adapt to team and organizational environment.

As soon as the exercise on the ability to adapt to the organizational environment was presented to **the Austrian trainers** during the first local discussion group, some **concerns were expressed concerning the understanding of the exercise** especially due to the fact that the audience will have a migration background and therefore maybe might not understand the exercise – this result is comparable with the result of the German LDG. At the same time the trainers stated their experience from other courses highlighting the **strong importance of flexibility for young people** in search of a job or an apprenticeship. The realization of the exercise on flexibility with the target group then showed that the trainers were right in their estimation and that the participants had a lot of difficulties in understanding the fairy tale. Also the time table was too short due to their deficient knowledge of German language. They had difficulties to read and understand the fairy tales. The trainer had to explain parts of the stories and their meaning. Another problem with these participants is their **low capability of abstraction and imagination** so that they needed a lot of help from the trainers to increase their creativity. Also the interrogation of the participants showed that they **didn't like this exercise and had no motivation** when doing it as they didn't understand how far such an exercise would be helpful to them. Even after an explanation they were not convinced about the sense of it.

4.2.2. Soft Skill 2: Communication

In this skill the Spanish experts remarked **the importance of assertiveness**. In Spain this term is mainly used in interpersonal communication terms rather than in emotional intelligence ones. Assertiveness is the most efficient communication style because it is clear, expresses one self's needs.

Moreover, in Germany communication is also rated as **one of the main skills in modern labour market** by the experts of the LDG – negotiations with clients and suppliers, working in the team, etc. There is a big demand to be met. The exercise **“Crime News Report”** seems more suitable for learners with academic background than the quite young (appr. 17 years) people, mostly low-educated, who are in a job-seeking position at present in the German context. As a **very simple but effective tool for communication purposes**, Germany therefore added the “Prepare Rules of Discussion” exercise.

In order to work on the development of this social skills category, **three activities** have been proposed in the **French LDG**: 2 of activities were chosen from the manual and adapted to the target group with this following objectives and 1 new activity was proposed by the participants in order to enable the young to be acquainted with the competency for communication; to learn to communicate within a group, to move from an analytical logic to a systemic logic, to highlight the principle of the scapegoat.

Bulgarian LDG participants find useful the exercise proposed in the coaching program called “Crime News Report” since through it coachees can **experience verbal transfer of information as well as information distortion and active listening**. Thus, they can learn how to avoid information distortion and to make conscious efforts (when communicating) to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, to try and understand the complete message being sent. One new activity was proposed by participants: Four of the group members in the piloting experience take part in that exercise. Participant N 1 should answer the random questions of participant N 2, tell his/ her first association of the random word given by participant N 3, and imitate the behavior and movements of participant N 4 at the same time. All the participants that were just observers really enjoyed that exercise. Participant N 1 shared that **being engaged in multiple activities (doing so many things at once) is really confusing**. Then, participants had to reflect on communication channels (verbal and non

verbal communication). They also commented on the difficulties, challenges, barriers to effective communication.

From the beginning on the **Austrian trainers** were convinced that this exercise will be difficult to realize with the Austrian target group and that it would need a lot of preparation from the trainer. In fact, many different steps had to be taken one after the other as the **complexity of this exercise is very high**. Also the **working with the diagram was supposed to be quite difficult**. In the realization of the exercise the trainers noticed quite quickly that the **educational level of the Austrian target group was too low** for working quite efficiently with this tool. In fact, the story couldn't be re-constructed by the participants as after each repetition more and more errors were made. Therefore one of the most important things to be done after the exercise was **to discuss the whole process with the participants and to find common solutions**. In this way they understood how they could make it better.

4.2.3. Soft Skill 3: Emotional Intelligence

This skill was **very positively** assessed by the Spanish experts. They stated that usually workers do not know how to manage, identify and solve emotional situations. Actually, they remarked the **most important situations at work are always linked to emotions**.

German experts state that this skill is to be **seen in strong connection to communication** and needs to be enforced when young people enter the labour market. Similar to Soft Skill 2: Communication, the **exercise here turned out to be very complex** for the **low-educated German target group**. As an alternative way of approaching the topic of emotional intelligence, the exercise “Molding” Sculptures was added to the manual.

In the **French** LDG 6 activities have been proposed for the development of this social skills category: 2 of activities were chosen from the manual and adapted to the target group and 4 new activities were proposed by the participants. The French LDG participants agreed that **young people often lack of self-confidence** and that the proposed activities should **focus on the development of “assertiveness”**. The aims of these new activities are: *How to learn to be assertive? How to overcome our fears in our relationships? How to understand the mechanisms of the statement? How to express clearly and firmly what we believe? Know how to react to verbal messages or not verbal destabilizing? Being able to give a personal point of view. Knowing how to present himself verbally in a weighted and positive way. Making difference between behavior and identity.*

Some **Bulgarian LDG participants** shared the opinion that **emotional intelligence** is the most important social skill and that **young people generally do not know how to cope with their emotions**. That corresponds to the findings in Y.U.S.S. Work Package 2 related to Bulgaria that HR experts consider **“being able to manage his/ her emotions” skill as a fundamental one**. LDG participants in Bulgaria find a correlation between emotional intelligence, self-management skills and success. Participants think that young people **need to be more self-aware of their own emotions** (for example, fear of failure which keeps you away from your goals and desires) and more assertive as well. So, it would be **useful if the coaching program covers some helpful homework assignments** that develop emotional intelligence (reflection on your own emotions and emotions of others). The Bulgarian participants **appreciated the exercise “Perceptual positions”** and

its usefulness regarding understanding of other people's feelings, thoughts and emotions. They considered the **third position of the independent observer as most important.**

The **Austrian trainer** working with the participants in the field of Emotional Intelligence stated his experiences in this field and **expressed his doubts about the Goleman model** stating that it might be **too specific for the target group.** In fact, also during the second Local Discussion Group meeting he related that the **exercise could not be realized in exactly the same way as planned in the manual.** Therefore some adaptations had to be made and the exercise was executed without the explaining model.

4.2.4. Soft Skill 4: Autonomy

In this case, even though in autonomy the motivation competence had not been placed, the **Spanish experts highlighted the importance of motivation**. This skill is interlinked with the Emotional Intelligence one and it is a really useful one.

For the **German context** of the **low-educated target group** it was stated in the LDG that many of these young people **lack of autonomy when working**. They are often **used to get information and wait for further instruction** – some of them even stop working and wait without any activity (not asking for help or new work activity). Once again the exercise for autonomy is quite challenging for a group of low-educated young people at the age of approx. 17 years. The coaches **suggest also to include a more basic exercise for “beginners”**.

From the **French** LDG 4 activities have been proposed for the development of this social skills category (one was adapted from the manual and 3 were proposed by the participants).

Coaches in **Bulgaria** consider the exercise in the manual **useful**; they reported that they would apply it in the future with other coaching groups or teams. Young people in Bulgaria are **usually financially dependent on their parents**. Specifically high school students are not used to being so autonomous and independent in their everyday lives. Therefore, **autonomy and self-confidence need to be encouraged in young people**. LDG Participants proposed a new activity for the development of autonomy which they called **“River crossing”**. By this exercise participants can experience autonomy in practice and also find out for themselves what tools they use to cope with difficulties in their lives, do they need other people’s help in such situations, or are they autonomous and able to cross the river by themselves. The river crossing activity consists of 3 elements: experience, self-monitoring and reflection (analysis). Bulgarian partners adapted that exercise as it **covers individual coping strategies**. It revealed participants’ vision on obstacles and ways/ resources for overcoming difficult situations. Another component of that exercise was playing the scene of river crossing. Participants were allowed to use the help of other group members and the chairs in the training room.

During the **Austrian LDG** the trainers **highlighted how important autonomy is in professional and private life of the target group**. But the target group **couldn't understand the meaning behind this exercise**. Each participant interpreted the need of different items in a different way. Furthermore an **additional problem was the linguistic understanding**. Thus, this practice has not produced its full effect with the participants. This was partly because the participants were not the right audience for this exercise and also because they saw no reason in the exercise. It can be said that the **exercises are not suitable (with reference to the participants' age / understanding / level of abstraction)**. There is a **lack of connection to reality**. Perhaps a **more realistic example** should be chosen instead of the scenario "plane crash". Furthermore, the participants would prefer **to be informed about the objectives of the exercise in order to stimulate their motivation**.

4.3. Complementary coaching tools

The experts in **Spain**, and especially the coach that later undertook the coaching pilot expressed that the delivered materials were **not sufficient to cover the 30 hours coaching** that the Y.U.S.S. project required. Therefore, the experts were asked to collaborate online with the coach and ADESEMA in order to find the best exercises to deepen into each of the soft skills. They **agreed in adding an initial session** presenting the coaching technique, agreeing on how to build a “safe zone” for the participants to feel free to express themselves and to learn the importance of planning at short, mid and long term.

In **Germany**, the LDG experts express the wish that there might be **some tools added, with special focus on basic skills/soft skills** as indicated above. The exercise “**Spaghetti Tower**” is also discussed as it is **not appropriate in Germany** “to play with food”. In particular, using the tool with participants having a family background related to social welfare this is not recommended. It was suggested to change it to wood bricks and a ball or something similar.

The **French LDG** agreed on 18 exercises for the development of social skills (7 were adapted from the manual and 11 were proposed by the LDG participants). It was remarked that **some of the activities proposed in the manual were known by our coaches** but so far they did not have materials to use them. Participants learn also that a lot of work on the topic was realised also in the framework of a **Comenius project “A new approach to social and cognitive skills”** (<http://www.euro-cordiale.lu/outils-cognitifs/EN/pres.htm>) and they could **choose some of the exercises** developed within this project in order to have enriched the activities proposed in the manual. Anyway, the **manual provided by ISQ in the framework of YUSS project was considered as very useful** and the **LDG participants showed a great interest** in and were **willing to work on its adaptation** in order to obtain a tool that they can use afterwards in their own organisations.

The Bulgarian LDG participants agreed that the complementary coaching tools offered in the coaching program **are useful since they encourage team work, collaboration, and**

enhance group cohesion. Participants appreciated the most the following complementary coaching tools:

- The role-play exercise
- Wheel of life
- Personal SWOT analysis

In Bulgaria, the LDG also proposed some coaching tools **that fit the national context** (some of them are already mentioned above). They also **demonstrated interest and willing to use the coaching program and tools offered** in it at their own work environments.

As the educational level of the **Austrian** target group was very low (incl. migration background), again with the complementary coaching tools, the **trainer had to explain** additionally the sense of the exercises and had to repeat most of the exercises several times. After the exercise quite a long time was also employed for **speaking about the general aspects of the different soft skills** and about the **improvements concerning the realisation of the different exercises.**

5. Possible Adaptations

5.1. Recommendations in terms of topics / soft skills

In Spain, the more emphasis the experts did was in general with the concept of coaching rather than training. Coaching means self – diagnosis and this entails a very deep process that they warned was difficult to reach in just 30 hours. So the first recommendation is **to widen the impact this materials can have by having a longer course**. The second general comment they made, was **regarding more interactive contents** should be used. Only exercises are presented in the Y.U.S.S. materials and of course other means would complement these. For example, **to use audio-visual materials** was recommended. Their third remark had to do with that there were **no gender or diversity issues involved** and that these should of course be incorporated as backbone of the coaching process. Therefore, it was recommended using specific **exercises to raise awareness of diversity issues** and of course having an expert coach who incorporate these issues into the process.

The **topics / soft skills in general were appreciated by the German coaches and learners**. More appropriate ones for the special target group of low-educated young persons were suggested by the coaches (see above).

The **French** LDG participants **generally agreed with the 4 categories of competences** as they were defined in the YUSS project. They thought that it would be interesting to **more emphasize on assertiveness**. For the French territory it was also important to add an activity for the development of competence **“respect the hierarchal relations”** which was evaluated with 17,50 in the framework of WP2.

In **Bulgaria**, the LDG participants also generally agreed that the 4 competencies **“autonomy”, “ability to adapt to organizational environment”, “communication” and “emotional intelligence”** are the **soft skills that young people in Bulgaria need to develop** in order to be competitive in the current labor market. However, they commented that some skills are missing in the manual or need to be extended. For example, one participant recommended adding the component **“non-violent communication”** (or collaborative communication) to the soft skill **“communication”**.

Some participants recommended more emphasis on autonomy and emotional intelligence (homework assignments, self-reflection and self-assessment etc.). Other participants suggested more emphasis on assertiveness, self-monitoring, self-confidence and ability to present yourself efficiently. The findings in the WP2 also indicate that the skill “respect for hierarchical relationships skill” is an important one.

The soft skills in the manual are also **very important for the Austrian trainers**. With regard to the special situation of the Austrian target group it would have been good to choose also other soft skill as **“conflict resolutions” and “team work”**. These two soft skills are important for the Austrian target group as they do not know how to behave with others or even in a group and what they can do if problems arise. The only solution to problems or conflicts is often the use of violence – comparably to the results of the Bulgarian LDG, also in Austria there is a need for a **non-violence communication tool**.

5.2. Recommendations in terms of complementary coaching tools

In Spain, the members of the LDG **warned of the use of role-playings**: they tend to **reinforce social stereotypes** rather than helping to overcome them. The experts **proposed several other tools** that ended up being part of the final Spanish pilot coaching. The experts suggested that the **exercises should be closer to the work place reality**, the situations that arise there. For example they suggested that the three positions game (Emotional Intelligence) could be used to get the young's **closer to a real working experience by analysing a job interview, an oral exam a conflict with parents or workmates etc.**

The feedback given within the second **French LDG** highlights the fact that young people who experienced the piloting **weren't at ease to share aspects of their private life within the group and they didn't know how to react to verbal messages** and/or not to destabilize verbally. For these reasons also, they had less appreciated some of exercises for the development of Emotional Intelligence

The **Bulgarian** LDG recommended **to include psychodramatic techniques and exercises** for developing emotional intelligence and other soft skills. Psychodrama works with human emotions and thoughts, so it is an effective way for young people to experience the soft skills covered in the coaching program. Participants also suggested giving **homework assignments which focus on self-monitoring** (for example, reflection on emotions, making autonomous decisions in everyday life, facing and overcoming difficult situation, etc.).

For the specific **Austrian** target group it would be good **to make individual interviews** and **to use different techniques of motivation**. Also the **“training on the job”** would be a good method for them. The most important point is to **make the participants aware** of the fact that they will only improve their situation **with a change of their personal attitude** and with **an increased motivation** making them willing to learn new things and to profit from new situations.

5.3. Recommendations concerning trainers

The **Spanish** experts did no special remarks on this. Of course they expressed that sensitive and experienced coaches should be leading these kinds of actions that go further than a training experience.

The practical guide and the translation to German were **suitable for the German coaches and trainers**. It was expressed that – not during piloting – but **for future purposes the exercises could even more be adapted by the coaches to the individual needs of their group**.

In **France**, the coaching model and the practical guide are **very useful for trainers** in order to understand the methodology and have a wide large of exercises/activities that they could undertake in order to support the public with which these trainers work. Anyway, it was noticed that **a coach should know very well the target group in order to adapt the activities**, the timing, the attitude, the environment,...

The **Bulgarian** participants gave **positive feedback on the coaching model** and the **practical guide**. The LDG appreciates the fact that the methodology takes a **practice oriented approach**. They find the **materials sufficient** for understanding, preparation, and implementation of coaching in groups of young people, individuals, teams, etc. The coaching program consists of various tools and exercises that would support a successful coaching initiative. Participants also find it **very useful having tools for self-assessment**. However, LDG participants in Bulgaria noted that a coach should know very well the coaching process, the coaching techniques and tools, differences between roles (of a coach, leader, counsellor etc.), common characteristics of the specific target group.

For the **Austrian** LDG the manual was quite clear to all the trainers even if some of the points needed a deep and extensive preparation and explanation. The **only point criticised was the tight timetable and the too tight instructions for the trainers**. Also the time for giving instructions and explanations should be longer.

5.4. Recommendations for setting/environment where to use the tools

The **Spanish** LDG experts found the tools **absolutely adaptable** and therefore transferable to other settings and target groups.

As mentioned before, it is important to **adapt the exercises to the low-educated context of the German target group** which consists e.g. of school-dropouts, low performers, learners with special needs, etc. It is possible to use the exercises in this context and in piloting experience as it turned out they appreciate the learning units “which are not only the normal ones”. However, the **objective of the unit has to be clear** for all of them, also the methodology of the exercise. Otherwise there might be the tendency of low motivation or on the other hand the risk of “making a joke of it”. It **has to be assured the there is a learning effect**.

The **French** LDG participants agreed that the tools are **transferable mostly to the regional context but also to the national context**. However, the activities for the social competences development are **variable in their usability in function of the target group**. One cannot have the same approach for graduates, as one has for school-drop outs!

In **Bulgaria**, all LDG participants agreed that the tools are **transferable** to the national context in general. They also agreed that **many groups can benefit** from this coaching program. However, different target groups require different approaches. For example, we found out during the piloting experience in Bulgaria that **high school students cannot refer themselves to work environment**. It was difficult for them to imagine or put themselves in the position of an employee; they still perceive and think in terms of peer relations, school, boy-girl relationships etc. So, we adapted the exercises in a way that will be more familiar with them. For example, when playing the exercise “perceptual positions” they assessed and thought of a conflict situation concerning school environment (teacher – student) but not work environment.

The **Bulgarian** LDG participants were in doubt when determining the most adequate target groups. Respectively, they expressed different opinions. Some of them think that the program would be most **suitable for young people under the age of 18 (students)**

and drop-outs since they lack many soft skills. Other participants think that **high school graduates are in the most delicate and demanding situation** as they are faced with the necessity to get a job or start a university. High school graduates and university students feel more insecure; they face, for the first time, labour market competition and that is a factor that makes these target groups consistent with the coaching program.

As the **Austrian** trainers participating in the two discussion group meetings only worked with participants having a low educational level as well as a migration background the recommendations coming from them only refer to this level of target group. So it can be said that generally there are no problems to transfer the materials and the methods to the Austrian **national context** and can be used in the way they are realized. The only thing to be changed is an **accurate “translation” of the exercises reaching the low educational level of the participants**. The problem also is if they do not understand something, they will **lose the rest of motivation** they still have and will not be able to concentrate anymore. Beside this, it would also be helpful to **tell them more about the objective** and the sense of these exercises and **in what kind this would be helpful in their further life**.

5.5. Recommendations for implementation

For the **Spanish** case, the experts said that an **individual coaching would be very advisable**, to wrap-up and give feedback to the participants. Also, in the adaptation group that took place after the pilot finished the experts said that **to follow-up the participants is a good practice** that will allow the good implementation of the coaching. These follow-up calls would allow the coaches to actually assess the progress the young person has made in terms of impact of the materials.

The **German** LDG pointed out that the tools could be implemented in **training** as well in **general education and VET education**. In particular, training activities that are not restricted to a certain curriculum could take advantage of these materials.

It was affirmed in the **French** LDG that this manual and tools could be found **very useful** for stakeholders on the territory **handling with support and guidance for youth facing difficulties in their professional and social integration**. Dissemination activities should be undertaken on the territory in order to make the tools known by local actors. This program for the development of social skills could find a great interest to be included in some of programs initiated by the Territorial Collectivity of Corsica, National Agency of Employment and Local Mission.

The **Bulgarian** LDG reaffirmed the usefulness of the coaching program. They suggested for potential implementation finding stakeholders that offer youth guidance and support; organizations, institutions, individuals who encourage young people's professional and social integration. Therefore, it is necessary to start a dissemination process so that national stakeholders become familiar with the program. Bulgarian participants in LDG suggested that **many national institutions, organizations and individuals would show interest in the program** since it is aimed at personal and professional development of young people. The National Employment Agency might show interest in including the coaching manual in some of their programs.

As written above the manual can be used as such in the **national Austrian context** including the exercises in the on-going courses for young people in search of an employment or apprenticeship place. The only improvement to be made is **to break the**

exercises down to the low educational level of the participants and to foresee more time for explanations including also a session for the explanation of the sense of the exercises.

5.6. Recommendations concerning diversity reasons in national context

It was discussed with the experts in **Spain** the feedback that the young participants had given on the coaching experience. The youngsters believed that the fact that there were several “rhythms” was an obstacle. By this they meant that the **tools were more useful for some participants than for others** because some of them were too familiar with these kinds of group interventions than others. This led them to express that the materials should be used with homogeneous groups. The experts stated however, that if the process really reaches the richness it should, the **diverse groups are proven to be more fruitful than homogeneous ones**. In addition, diverse groups **maintain the objective of diversity in the room**.

In the **German** LDG there was not seen a problem of diversity as the exercises are usable for all genders and different cultural backgrounds. However, as mentioned above in some cases there is a **need for further explanation** for low-educated young people or for those having a migration background.

The **Austrian** LDG group pointed out a very similar statement: In the national Austrian context it has also to be considered that the **major part (90%) of the participants of this local course are migrants** and therefore it would be wise to choose **exercises that would be understandable without having knowledge of any national or even European context**. This means taking exercises that are completely detached from cultural context.

5.7. Recommendations for printed materials

The **Spanish** experts remarked that the printed materials were clear but that the quality of the layout design was very poor. They proposed to have a professional team to edit the final materials.

In **Germany**, some minor problems with translation have to be solved for the German version. In general, the coaches are very happy with the **attractive layout** and also with the structure/clarity of the product.

In the opinion of the **French and Bulgarian** LDG the materials are considered to be **appropriate in terms of layout, clarity, appropriateness, usability, availability**.

All **Austrian** participants agreed in saying that the **layout of the manual is very attractive** and that it is a pleasure to read it. Therefore the trainers were glad to work with this tool, even if sometimes they had to change the exercises a little bit in order to use the content for the Austrian target group.

5.8. Others

In **Germany**, the piloting experience showed that even the piloting evaluation questionnaires were too difficult for most of the participants in order to give their feedback to the learning experience with the manual and tools. Coaches had to support them with explanations in order to fill in the questionnaires. It might be the case that some of the participants took 1 as the best (according to the German school system where a mark 1 is the best). It turned out for the German LDG that for this target group maybe a questionnaire on the basis of smilies, etc. could have been of advantage. This fact also shows that there is a need for tools adapted to the low-educated target group context.

6. Any other practical tips for coaches/trainers working with young unemployed

In general, the Spanish experts remarked that **working in Spain with young unemployed now is a huge challenge**. They suffer from really high unemployment rates (57%) and in general do not have many expectations about the future. Many of them plan to emigrate and no real alternatives are seen by them. In this context, the main advice from the coaches is to be really aware of the reality but to use tools to build alternatives for the youngsters. This is, work with them in order to try to **isolate their own perspectives from the overall economic and social context**. This is usually reached by helping them to understand the planning and process rationale.

When working with the manual and tools in **Germany**, it has to be explained in details **why these tools are used** and **where the connection to real life is to be seen**. The group of low-educated and/or low motivated young unemployed people in Germany that is seeking an apprenticeship position **often lacks of a deeper understanding of life perspective**. This means they **try to avoid any stress or effort** - not being aware that this would be helpful for them in the future. When getting them involved in the Y.U.S.S. Training there is to be a clear understanding of the exercises/skills but also of the general approach of increasing individual soft skills. As explained above in this case they could take profit from the coaching – and it could even be helpful in the activities they are being trained at present, e.g. for being punctual, to attend on a regular basis, to accept the opinions of other participants, etc.

The evaluation of the **French** LDG showed that all participants **were aware about general objectives** of their participation to this work meeting. As mentioned here above the LDG participants were **very interested in the topic** agreeing with the Y.U.S.S. classifications of social competences in 4 categories and choosing to adapt 7 exercises from the manual and propose 11 new exercises.

The **Bulgarian** coaches shared their coaching experience with other local discussion group (LDG) participants. When referring to usefulness of YUSS methodology and tools, it is important to distinguish between experience of coaches and other participants since coaches have direct observations on effects and results of the coaching program.

Coaches find the methodology very useful because it offers interactive techniques and gives young people the opportunity to practice these soft skills in a team. They appreciate the **advantages of the principle “learning through experience” incorporated** in the coaching material. The coaching program is based on **improvisation, innovation and interaction** which makes it especially **interesting and motivating for young people**. Coaches find it challenging to decide for which target groups that methodology would be most useful. The Bulgarian trainer and the psychologist who have not participated in the piloting, received the coaching manual in advance in order to be familiar with it. They showed a great interest in the Y.U.S.S. products. They appreciated the interactive methods of coaching and **referred it to the national context** and the **rare opportunity of high school students in Bulgaria to express their opinions and ideas, and be active but not passive learners**. The Group participants shared their opinion that in order to be more useful, the coaching manual **needs to comprise more aspects of these soft skills and to emphasize some of them**. They also mentioned some missing soft skills that need to be included and the importance of presenting soft skills as a nuclear that is constructed of different interdependent soft skills. They also reported that the coaching program needs to include **more exercises and homework assignments** as well as **self-monitoring techniques** if we seek long term effects on users.

The **Bulgarian** participants in the LDG group proposed some practical tips for coaches/trainers working with young unemployed:

- Coaches/trainers need to know the specifics of the target group (the coachees)
- Coaches/trainers need to plan and organise their work in accordance with these specifics

Some **Austrian** trainers proposed that the organisation of **different feedback-rounds** after each exercise would be a good additional tool and that there should be an easy and comprehensible explanation of the added value written and presented in an easy language.

The manual itself is a good auxiliary means for the training, but the most important in the work with the **Austrian** target group is the relation between trainer/participant and the **formation of a “group”**. The **young people are thinking “orientated on the moment”** and they don't think about if they can use the learnt things at a later moment. Thus, it is important to inspire enthusiasm to the young people as only in this way young

people are able to learn. It is also important **to train the “behaviour” of young people** in order **to develop competences** and **to encourage the interaction**.

7. Conclusion

It can be seen that the organisation and realization of the Local Discussion Groups were very much appreciated by the participants in all countries as on the evaluation questionnaires only scores above 5 were submitted (range 1-10).

As explained in details in the Global Report, the member of the national LDG in the five countries Spain, Germany, France, Bulgaria and Austria contributed with their expert and first-hand feedback substantially to the adaptation of the manual and tools.

However, the feedback is always related to the national context. In particular, this is to be seen with the different target groups for the Y.U.S.S. programme (Spain: high unemployment rate for young people, also with academic education – lack of perspective in national context // Austria and Germany: low unemployment rates – mostly low-educated and/or migrant background – lack of motivation). As a positive aspect it has to be pointed out that the wide range of target groups was no real obstacle for working with the tools: After an adaptation in wording and/or the insertion of additional tools the Y.U.S.S. coaching manual and tools can be used in all the different countries with their special requirements for coaching programmes.

So it can be said that the Local Discussion Group had a lot of success and gave also some valuable input for the trainers, coaches, learners and last but not least the Y.U.S.S. project team in their further work.

