



Pilot coaching experience - BULGARIA

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

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Partnership

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1. General Overview

The pilot coaching experience in Bulgaria took place on the 15, 16, 16 and 22nd of April, 2013.

The pilot coaching experience in Bulgaria had the following structure:

- Group work: 4 sessions x 5 hours each
- Individual work (homework assignments): 10 hours

Our target group consisted of high school students 17-18 years of age, 11th grade. The total number of participants were 10: 7 females and 3 males. Six participants experience difficulties in communication and social adaptation in general. Therefore, they meet the school psychologist who helps them succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.

Only a few of our participants actually showed interest in employment issues. They also found it difficult to imagine and represent work environment. The main factor lying behind that is age of participants and their general lack of work experience. They also live with their parents which still provide financial support to them. Thus, we can conclude that participants do not feel threatened by high rate of unemployment and increased labour-market competition in Bulgaria. However the coaching programme was very useful in order to equip them with the skills required for employment through situation close to their social environment.

2. Session 1 “Ability to adapt to organizational environment”

Bulgarian Development Agency presented the Y.U.S.S. project and its objectives. Then, the coaches introduced themselves, and we all greeted each other through handshakes and told our names in a clockwise order. The coaches introduced many warm-up exercises, icebreaking and get-to-know-each-other activities like curious questionnaire, “Tell what you think about the person that coat belongs to”, clapping, “Tied Up in Knots”, etc. Coaches also used sociometry to measure social relations within the group.

Participants shared with the rest of the group their previous knowledge about the soft skills issue and one soft skill they consider themselves good at. When giving feedback, coaches were specific and realistic; they focused on the behaviour and not on the character, attitudes or personalities.

After making the association tree, coaches presented the first soft skill – ability to adapt to organizational environment and introduced the exercise „Fairy-tales in a new guise“. Coaches 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. Participants seemed very excited and interested in the exercise. They put the flipchart paper on the floor and started drawing. The exercise sparked off a lively discussion. The second group was very innovative and presented the fairy tale by using cartoons. While telling the fairy tales in a new guise, participants played the different roles. They also imitated the characters’ voices.

Workplan of the first session on 15th of April, 2013:

Schedule	Objectives	Contents	Methodological Approach (e.g. tools, exercises)	Duration
Day 1				
1) Project presentation	1) To present the project	2), 3), and 5) presentations	2) The Group welcomes two random members with a loud clapping. Then debrief and speak about the differences in the reactions.	1) 10' 2) 15'
2) Clapping	2) Team building	4) To choose the category that mostly fits participants understanding of the soft skill “ability to adapt”.	3) The participants make questions to each other to get acquainted.	3) 20' 4) 15'
3) Curious questionnaire	3) To get to know each other	6) To empower and understand the idea of planning and taking steps for accomplishing one’s goals.	4) Everyone chooses a category that steps on. Coaches have written in advance predominant associations.	5) 20 6) 20 7) 15'
4) Sociometry	4) To measure social relations within the group	7) To get information on the participants		8) 15'
5) Ground rules	5) To set overall rules			9) 20'
6) Poster	6) To get to know more about oneself and others			10) 15' 11) 15' 12) 30'
7) Timeline past	7) To assess a past			13) 5'
8) SWOT – strong and weak points				14) 20' 15) 15 16) 15' 17) 20'
9) Coffee break				
10) Group cohesion “Tied Up in Knots”				
11) Storyboard				

<p>12) Presentation N= 1 and discussion</p> <p>13) Instructions and group division</p> <p>14) Group work</p> <p>15) Presentation of the first fairy-tale and</p> <p>16) Presentation of second fairy-tale</p> <p>17) Feedback</p>	<p>accomplishment and its steps</p> <p>8) To analyze oneself in terms of soft skills</p> <p>9) –</p> <p>10) –</p> <p>11) To establish a personal plan</p> <p>12) To understand the nature and components of this soft skill</p> <p>13)–</p> <p>14), 15) and 16) To experience flexibility, adaptation and teamwork</p>	<p>self-assessment and to get conscious of themselves.</p> <p>8) To develop the idea that in order to reach an objectives one needs to assess the alternatives, steps and resources</p> <p>9) –</p> <p>10) –</p> <p>11) –</p> <p>12) What is flexibility and adaptation</p> <p>13)</p> <p>14), 15) and 16) Presenting the two fairy tales through acting and drawings</p>	<p>5) The group builds a safe zone by setting the rules.</p> <p>6) The participants write and share with the rest of the group: their previous knowledge about the soft skills issue, one soft skill they consider themselves good at, and something that defines them personally and professionally</p> <p>6) Timeline: standing up and narrating the steps they took to accomplish their goal.</p> <p>8) Personal SWOT analysis (p. 104 of the manual)</p> <p>11) Storyboard: objective, starting point and intermediate steps, taking into account the SWOT analysis</p> <p>12) Presentation N=1 14), 15) and 16)</p> <p>Flipchart paper</p>	
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Participants shared their experience, feelings, and thoughts after the exercise. They were fascinated by the natural way they had become a team. They said that this team work process required cooperation, collaboration, adaptation to the needs and ideas of other group members. Participants' feedback included also creativity, inspiration, innovative ideas, and joy. They especially liked the part of drawing and playing the different roles.

3. Session 2 “Communication”

The second soft skill that was addressed by coaches was communication.

Feedback: First, each participant shared his experiences, thoughts, feelings concerning the previous day; then, his/ her reflections on the “three good things” exercise.

Afterwards, the coacher suggested a warm-up exercise where each participant shows some movement or physical exercise and other group members repeat it.

Brainstorming and the expectation tree: Each participant had to think of his/ her associations and ideas connected to the soft skill “communication”. They had to write them on a sticking note. The coaches had in advance drawn an expectation tree. Each participant pasted up his/ her note with associations on that tree. Then, coaches read all the notes and divided these associations into several categories:

- Entertainment/ social event
- Sharing
- Inclusion
- Understanding
- Exchange of ideas/ information/ experiences
- Overcoming difficulties
- Emotional expression
- Physical contact

Participants were asked to choose the category that mostly fits their understanding of the soft skill “communication”.

Again, the coaches chose to test the exercise from the manual „Crime report“, but also they proposed new exercises in order to cover some other components of that soft skill. Each participant shared his/ her experience, reflections and observations during that exercise on the competence communication. They commented on the difficulties, challenges, barriers to effective communication. Participants reflected on distortion of communication.

After group work, participants were instructed to make a scene using the storyline in the crime report. They could use all the materials available – chairs, objects in the room, paper, markers etc.

Coachers gave participants the following homework assignment: Try to face different (and difficult for you) communication situations in everyday life (example: people you don't know but you want to know better; conflict situations etc.).

Workplan of the second session on 16th of April, 2013:

Day 2				
Schedule	Objectives	Contents	Methodological Approach	Minutes
1) Feedback. Discussion on the homework assignments	1) Improving learning through reflection	1) Homework assignments and reflections	1) The group sits in circle and each one shares his/her writings on the homework assignments	1) 20' 2) 15' 3) 20' 4) 15'
2) Warm-up exercise	2) Increasing energy; group cohesion	2) Physical exercises	2) Each participant shows some movement or physical exercise and other group members repeat it.	5) 30' 6) 20
3) Brainstorming: An expectation tree	3) Analysis in terms of communication	3) To get information on participants associations	3) Each participant writes his/her associations and ideas connected to the soft skill "communication" and puts his/her note with associations on the	7) 15' 8) 5'
4) Sociometry	4) To measure social relations within the group	4) To choose the category that mostly fits participants understanding of the soft skill "ability to adapt".		9) 10' 10) 20'
5) Presentation and discussion	5) To present the social competence "communication"	5) Presentation N=2		11) 15' 12) 20'
6) Coffee break	6) –	6) –		13) 20'
7) Warm-up exercise	7) Group cohesion and observation skills	7) Described above		14) 30'
8) Instructions	8) –	8) Participants listen to the crime report and try to remember it		15) 15'
9) Group listening	9) Improving listening skills through experience	9) Participants transfer the		16) 30'
10) Information exchange	10) To experience verbal transfer of information			
11) Debriefing	11) Improving			
12) Group discussion and feedback				
13) Coffee break				
14) Group work				
15) Warm-up exercise				
16) Wrap-up				

	<p>learning through reflection</p> <p>12) To gain insights and to learn about the communication process</p> <p>13) –</p> <p>14) To promote effective communication</p> <p>15) Group cohesion</p> <p>16) Feedback; general conclusions. Giving homework assignments</p>	<p>crime report</p> <p>10) Coachers ask helpful/useful questions</p> <p>11) The group members discuss the given task</p> <p>12) –</p> <p>13) Teamwork: making a scene representing the crime</p> <p>14) Laughing round: First, the group starts with laughing “ha-ha-ha”, second – “ho-ho-ho, third – “hee-hee-hee”</p> <p>15) Coachers give feedback on performance.</p>	<p>expectation tree</p> <p>4) Everyone chooses a category that steps on. Coachers have written in advance predominant associations.</p> <p>5) Presentation and projector</p> <p>6) –</p> <p>7) –</p> <p>8) –</p> <p>9) Copies of the instructions and the crime report</p> <p>10) –</p> <p>11) Useful/helpful questions</p> <p>12) –</p> <p>13) –</p> <p>14) Flipchart papers, chairs etc. All tools available</p> <p>15) –</p> <p>16) –</p>	
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We tried to focus on techniques, questions and exercises that foster creativity, productiveness and team cooperation through communication. We tried to include exercises that focus on non verbal communication as well.

4. Session 3 “Autonomy”

Again, participants shared their experiences, thoughts, feelings concerning the previous day, followed by the warm-up exercise “Catch my finger” and brainstorming on autonomy. Participants identified the following categories:

- Independence
- Self-reliance
- Originality
- Coping with difficult situations
- Ability to resist inappropriate influence attempts from others
- Self-awareness

Then, coaches introduced the river crossing exercise. Instructors asked participants to perform the task independently and not to speak to each other during the exercise. Each participant had to draw how she/he imagines herself/ himself crossing a river. What tools he/ she will use to cross it. The instructions of the exercise weren't so specific aiming to widen participants' imagination. We adapted the river crossing exercise as it covers individual coping strategies and develops autonomy. Participants' performance revealed their vision on obstacles and ways/ resources for overcoming difficult situations. Then, participants presented their individual crossing of the river and the tools they used to do that. Rivers and tools on participants' drawings varied a lot – from rafts and bridges to magic and flying. Each participant had to make a scene that represented his/ her crossing the river using the help of other group members and the objects available in the training room (for example, chairs).

After the river crossing exercise, coaches presented the third soft skill “Autonomy” covered in the coaching manual. Participants reflected on the differences between autonomous employees and employees who are “out of control”. Participants discussed different aspects of autonomy.

Additionally, coaches introduced the exercise “Playing one’s part” proposed in the coaching manual. Generally participants successfully conducted the exercise. Participants’ analytical skills are well developed and they offered good suggestions when evaluating the importance of individual objects. Coaches asked some of the questions included in the list of helpful questions at the end of the autonomy section. Coaches encouraged participants to reflect on their competence of independence.

Autonomy is one of the core competences and it is important that young people learn how to master it. Therefore, the coaching manual needs to include more activities developing the autonomy skill.

Workplan of the third session on 17th of April, 2013:

Day 3				
Schedule	Objectives	Contents	Methodological Approach (e.g. tools, exercises)	Minutes
1) Feedback. Discussion on the homework assignments	1) Improving learning through reflection	1) Homework assignments and reflections	1) The group sits in circle and each one shares his/her writings on the homework assignments	1) 20' 2) 15' 3) 20' 4) 15' 5) 20' 6) 50'
2) Warm-up exercise “Catch my finger”	2) Increasing energy; group cohesion	2) Catching the other person’s finger	2) Everyone holds both their arms out sideways. The left hand has its palm open towards the roof. The right hand has its index finger pointing to the floor. Everyone puts the down pointing index finger of their right hand, into the open left hand palm of the person	7) 30' 8) 15' 9) 20' 10) 5' 11) 5'
3) Brainstorming: An expectation tree	3) Analysis in terms of autonomy	3) To get information on participants associations		12) 20' 13) 20' 14) 20' 15) 25'
4) Sociometry	4) To measure social relations within the group	4) To choose the category that mostly fits participants understanding of the soft skill “autonomy”.		
5) Coffee pause	5) –	5) –		
6) River crossing	6) To experience autonomy	6) Each participant should draw how she/he imagines		
7) Presentation and discussion	7) To present the social			

<p>8) Warm-up exercise 9) Coffee pause 10) Instructions for individual work 11) Giving copies of the objects 12) Individual work 13) Discussion on object choices. Argumentation. 14) Discussion and analysis 15) Wrap-up</p>	<p>competence “autonomy” 8) Group cohesion and observation skills 9) – 10) Preparation of group members 11) Preparation of group members 12) To experience autonomy. Individual reflection 13) Reasons on individual choices 14) Group discussion; insights 15) Feedback; general conclusions. Giving homework assignments</p>	<p>herself/ himself crossing a river. What tools he/she will use to cross it. 7) Presentation N=3 8) Participant 1 should answer the random questions of participant 2, tell his/ her first association of the random word given by participant 3, and imitate the behavior and movements of participant 4 at the same time. 9) – 10) Content instructions (the one in the coaching manual) 11) Participants work individually and reflect on objects. Copying in a 12) Coping with a difficult situation using autonomy 13) Analysis in group. Seeing other</p>	<p>sitting on their right. On the count of three, everyone must try to catch the other person’s finger and get their own finger away from the person on their right. 3) Each participant writes his/ her associations and ideas connected to the soft skill “autonomy” and puts his/ her note with associations on the expectation tree 4) Everyone chooses a category that steps on. Coaches have written in advance predominant associations. 5) – 6) Participants need flipchart paper, markers, pencils 7) Presentation, projector 8) None 9) None 10) 2 instructions copies for coaches 11) Paper 12) None 13) None</p>	
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		participants' viewpoints and choices. 14) Coachers ask useful questions for reflection and insights 15) Coachers give feedback on performance. General conclusions of participants.	14) None 15) None	
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5. Session 4 “Emotional intelligence”

Participants need to be able to identify, modify and regulate their emotions so we decided to present the exercise “When I was 10 years old”. One possible way to develop emotional intelligence is through reflective practice and an exercise like this can improve self-reflection skills. Participants engaged in the exercise and regressed to being 10 years old. They had to recall personal stories – emotionally significant situations of this period. Then, they had to understand their own moods, feelings and drives as well as their effect on others. The next step to improve our emotional intelligence is thinking of a way to control or redirect the disruptive impulses and emotions. So, participants were asked to analyze and compare control over their emotions back then and now, in the present moment.

Again, brainstorming on emotional intelligence, sociometry and a warm-up exercise followed.

Then, coachers introduced the exercise “Perceptual positions”. This activity is described in the coaching manual and it is quite useful since it assesses a situation/ event from several different perspectives. Thus, participants had the opportunity to develop a new understanding of a teacher-student conflict. Participants found that exercise quite interesting and useful. However, they found it difficult to be without prejudices when “stepping into the shoes” of the teacher and the independent observer. They couldn’t resist being subjective. Still, they had some insights and through the

coachers' support and guidance they succeeded to see, hear and experience the situation from different perspectives.

Workplan of the fourth session on 22th of April, 2013:

Day 4				
Schedule	Objectives	Contents	Methodological Approach (e.g. tools, exercises)	Minutes
1) Feedback. Discussion on the homework assignments	1) Improving learning through reflection	1) Homework assignments and reflections	1) Discussing homework assignments	1) 20'
2) The exercise "When I was 10 years old"	2) Self-reflection and emotional introspection	2) Memories of emotional events	2) Everyone shares how he/ she felt when they were ten years old	2) 25'
3) Analysis of emotional control ("Now")	3) Assessment and comparison of emotional control	3) Individual analysis	3) –	3) 10'
4) Brainstorming: An expectation tree	4) Analysis in terms of EI	4) Information on participants' associations	4) Sharing associations and ideas connected to the soft skill "EI"	4) 20'
5) Sociometry	5) To measure social relations within the group	5) To choose the category that mostly fits participants understanding of the soft skill "EI"	5) Participants need flipchart paper, markers, pencils	5) 15'
6) Coffee pause	6) –	6) –	6) –	6) 20'
7) Warm-up exercise	7) Group cohesion	7) –	7) –	7) 15'
8) Presentation and discussion	8) To present the social competence "EI"	8) Presentation N=4	8) Presentation, projector	8) 30'
9) Instructions for the exercise "Perceptual positions"	9) –	9) Instructions from the coaching manual	9) 2 instructions copies for coachers	9) 5'
10) Position 1		10) Feelings, thoughts from the "I" position	10) A4 sized paper	10) 20'
		11) Feelings, thoughts from the "You" position	11) A4 sized paper	11) 20'
			12) A4 sized paper	12) 20'
			13) None	13) 20'
			14) None	14) 15'
			15) None	15) 20'
			16) None	16) 25'

11) Position 2 12) Position 3 13) Reflection 14) Group discussion and feedback 15) Warm-up exercise 16) Wrap-up	10) To experience EI 11) -//- 12) -//- 13) Improving self-awareness 14) To gain insights. Reflection 15) – 16) General conclusions	12) Feelings, thoughts from the independent observer position 13) Coachers ask useful questions for reflection and insights 14) Coachers give feedback on performance. 15) – 16) General conclusions of participants.		
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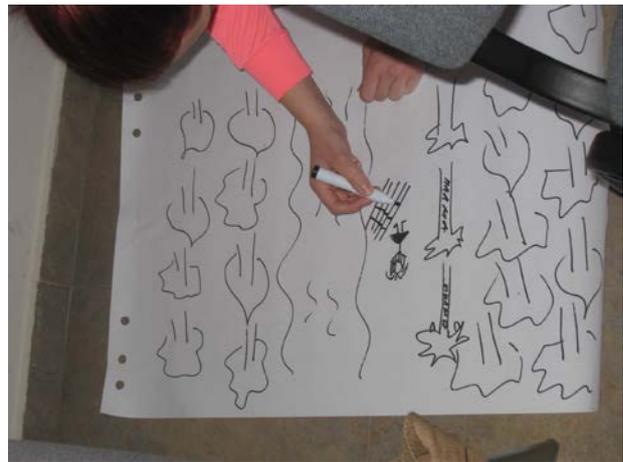
After the fourth session participants received and filled out the Pilot Experience Evaluation Form. The overall satisfaction with the contents in the coaching experience is 8 of maximum 10 scores. Most participants think that they have improved their employability skills by participating in this experience (an average score of 7). The skills mostly strengthened in participants by the coaching experience are “autonomy” (an average of 8.4) and “ability to adapt to organisational environment” (an average of 8.2). Most participants consider the coaching techniques helpful and useful for developing their employability skills (an average of 8.3). Highest scores are reported on statements concerning facilitators’:

- Ability to boost their assets and coach them (an average of 9.7).
- Ability to connect with coachees (an average of 9.6).
- Overall facilitation of the coaching experience (an average of 9.7).
- Knowledge of the materials/ contents in the coaching experience (an average of 9.4).

Generally, the overall satisfaction of participants with the experience is high (an average of 8.7). They enjoyed the sessions and learned to act like a team, and to cooperate with each other. They appreciated the coaching experience/contents/exercises and reported that it helped them develop their social skills.

Annexe I: Coaching experience photographs







Annexe II: Attendace sheets