



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



GUIDEBOOK

Youth Employment Initiative

Supported Employment Services
for young people provided by youth coaches



Erasmus+



NATIONAL AGENCY
for European Educational
Programmes and Mobility

This project has been co-funded by the European Commission through
Erasmus+ Program (KA2: Strategic Partnership / Youth)

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect only the views of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

GUIDEBOOK

Youth Employment Initiative

Supported Employment Services
for young people provided by youth coaches

Project number: 2020-2-MK01-KA205-077976
Erasmus+ KA2 – Exchange of good practices
Strategic partnership for youth

Authors:

Marina Tosheska
Zvonko Dimoski
Cristina Hangea
Luigi Ballacco

Project Coordination:

Marina Tosheska

Graphic Design:

Local Action Group AGRO LIDER
Monika Veleska

Any form of means or reproduction or distribution (including the Internet) is authorized, except those for commercial purposes, as long as the source is recognized and mentioned. It is therefore necessary to mention:

- The authors
- The title of the project: Youth Employment Initiative co-funded by the European Commission through Erasmus+ Program (KA2 Strategic Partnerships / Youth)



When young people have access to work,
our future is more prosperous.

The Youth Employment Initiative through
supported employment services can
play a key role in enabling young people to enjoy
their human rights and
achieve full inclusion into the labor market.





Contents

PREFACE	1
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE' PROJECT.....	2
PARTNERS	3
Association for rural development Local Action Group AGRO LIDER	3
Asociatia Tineri pentru Comunitate Bistrita	3
InCo - Molfetta	4
ABOUT SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED BY YOUTH COACHES	5
CORE PRINCIPLES	6
YOUTH COACH	7
STEPS IN PROVIDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.....	9
MONITORING AND OUTCOME MEASUREMENT.....	13
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	14
CONCLUSIONS.....	15
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	16





PREFACE

The idea of the Youth Employment Initiative project emerged from the desire of three European organizations to support young people's success on the labor market, by reducing the number of young people who are not involved in education, employment or training (NEET) through supported employment services for vulnerable youth provided by youth coaches, and fostering young people's skills so they can integrate themselves better into society and the job market.

The labor market situation in the partner organizations' countries of Italy, North Macedonia, and Romania is characterized by low economic activity and high unemployment rates. The current COVID-19 pandemic has a serious influence on youth employment, especially employment of disadvantaged young people that leads to a higher youth unemployment rate and young people excluded from the labor market.

Opportunities for young people to find a job are bound to the general state of the economy and overall employment situation in the YEI project partners' countries. The countries have been attempting to reduce youth unemployment, through policy creation, collaboration with the private sector and CSOs, and undertaking programs as well as measures to decrease the youth unemployment.

The NGOs can play an important role in providing services to support young people entering the labor market, particularly NEET, young people with disabilities disadvantaged young people.

Many NGOs work on youth employment initiatives, focusing to promote the development of Supported Employment across Europe and beyond. They have played a pivotal role in the promotion and development of employment opportunities for people with disabilities and people at social risk to access and stay in employment. Know-how transfer of actions and introduction of the best practices of European civil society organizations can have a positive impact in achieving significant results in the field of youth employment, youth integration and social development.

The Supported Employment services assist the potential young job-seekers to identify their skills and work preferences, as well as individual support to obtain and maintain paid jobs in the open labor market.

The supported employment services were not only successfully implemented with the youth in the framework of the project Youth Employment Initiative, but they also became an integral part of the methodologies used by our professionals in their work with young people.

With the present guide, the partners want to offer a global overview of the Youth Employment Initiative – supported employment services provided by youth coaches to any professionals working in the field of social inclusion and youth employability, interested in introducing and applying such supported employment services in their work with young people.



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE' PROJECT

Youth Employment Initiative is a transnational project carried out between 2020 and 2022 by a partnership formed of organizations from three European countries: Italy, North Macedonia, and Romania. Facing similar challenges related to the youth unemployment, reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the European partners were encouraged to explore the benefit of supported employment services provided by youth coaches for young people with disability and disadvantaged youth to improve their employability, integration and social development.

The main motivation of the partner organizations to implement the YEI project was to enable young people to enjoy their human rights and achieve full inclusion into the labor market which is the path to wealthier economies, more inclusive and fairer societies, and stronger democracies.

Connection, cooperation, and sharing good practices among partner organizations will help addressing the barriers faced by disadvantaged youth and designing supported employment services that will be provided by youth coaches. The youth coaches will offer job-seeking support for disadvantaged youth aged 15 - 29. Thus, these young people can realize their aspirations, improve their living conditions and fulfill their responsibilities as productive agents and citizens. The decision to carry it out as a transnational project is the best way to exchange the know-how of action among the culturally diverse NGOs because hands-on involvement will deliver a much more profound and sustainable effect than theory and explaining with words ever could.

The idea of the Youth Employment Initiative Project came about thanks to the financing received in the framework of the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union and the support by the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility.

The project's objective is to contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable society by creating employment opportunities for young people from vulnerable groups.

The YEI project aims at contributing to a decrease in the number of young people who are not in education, employment, and training (NEET) by providing supported employment services with youth coaches. The methodology proposes to bolster the skills of vulnerable youth, especially soft skills and core work skills. This will be followed up by individual support of employment efforts in order to adequately prepare young people for a workplace environment and a professional career and to provide them with ongoing support. Youth coaches connect young job-seekers with employers so they have an active role in assisting applicants in addressing skills sought by employers.

Youth Employment Initiative project is not only for the young people but also for the professionals working in the field(s) of civic education, youth work, and special needs education oriented to employment services. The latter group will have an opportunity to improve their skills and competences to work with disadvantaged youth. At the same time, the project will brace involved organizations in building supported employment programs by combining the educational context with the supported employment method in a unique way.



PARTNERS

The Youth Employment Initiative Project is the result of a strategic partnership between three European organizations: Association for rural development Local Action Group AGRO LIDER, North Macedonia, **Asociația Tineri pentru Comunitate Bistrita** (Youth for the Community Association Bistrita) Romania, and Association InCo Molfetta, Italy.

Association for rural development Local Action Group AGRO LIDER (LAG AGRO LIDER)

is an independent, non-governmental, non-political, and non-profit organization founded in 2014. The organization attempts to increase opportunities for people from rural areas in socio-economic development, education, culture and sport. The Local Action Group Agro Lider operates as an association of CSOs in partnership with the Local Government on Municipalities of Krivogashtani, Krushevo, Dolneni, and Prilep. Since its establishment in 2014, LAG AGRO LIDER has acted as a bridge between the local government, public institutions, business entities, and the civic sector. It has been actively seeking to encourage all relevant actors to work together for benefit of the entire community.

The core values of the organization are active participation, democracy, equal opportunities, transparency, solidarity, tolerance, understanding, mutual support, and collaboration.

The organization uses a holistic approach to undertake development initiatives to cater to the protection of human rights, attainment of sustainable livelihoods, and empowerment of the young people in rural areas.

Local Action Group AGRO LIDER aims to create equal access opportunities in all areas that affect young people-education, employment, health, social security, social inclusion, recreation, and personal relations. It focuses on motivating, unifying and empowering young people with their capacity and energy to show their knowledge and creativity and take an active role in leading the change in the community. It provides services to help young people develop personal, interpersonal, and job skills, offer a leadership opportunity and increase the contribution of youth in the economic development of their local communities. The LAG AGRO LIDER is constantly expanding its services to provide education and care to young people who receive no other assistance in particular.

The services offered by the LAG AGRO LIDER have extended to cover a wide range of areas: economic development, education and training, social and health care, gender equality, culture, and sport.

Asociația Tineri pentru Comunitate Bistrita (Youth for the Community Association Bistrita) was founded in April 2013 by a group of young people who wanted to carry out their projects that aim at promoting the active citizenship of youth through personal development and community projects and activities. Our usual activities include: recruiting and training young people aged between 13 and 30 who are interested in becoming volunteers, organizing different volunteering activities in urban and rural schools – even schools for mentally disabled students, kindergartens, specific institutions such as the Night Centre – part of the Municipal Department for Social Services, or in the community whenever we identify a need.

We also carry out theater workshops, creative recycling workshops, or literature and poems workshops in schools and kindergartens from urban and rural areas. Moreover, we organize workshops that aim to develop the creativity of our volunteers. They produce artistic handicrafts such as recycled paper handbags, postcards, and different ornaments by using the techniques of quilling and origami. At the end of the workshops and on specific occasions such as the 1st of March or Christmas, we organize public exhibitions to sell our products and use the funds for the activities of the association. We are

interested in the well-being of vulnerable young people for whom we organize once a year a charitable event. Since December 2014, we have organized Charitable Christmas Concerts with the performance of our talented volunteers and well-known local artists and Christmas Fairs with handmade ornaments created by our volunteers. As a youth NGO, it is our focus to help young people develop personally and professionally by facilitating their participation in different local, national, and international training courses, seminars, or youth exchanges. Thus, we have developed solid cooperation with local, national, and European institutions or NGOs. Last but not least, we must mention here that one of the main aims of our organization is to “give life to the rural areas” of our region, Bistrita-Nasaud county, through activities designed for the young people of those communities, such as: raising awareness workshops, open employment opportunities for young people in rural areas, ecological actions, fundraising events, workshops, etc. Our activities aim to improve the quality of life for young people in rural areas and decrease the migration of rural youth.

InCo - Molfetta is a no-profit association, born in 2016, thanks to a group of members moving to the Apulia region after several years of mobility experience abroad. The members decided to settle down a new local organization in Apulia to provide local youngsters the same opportunities as they had benefitted. The association aims to promote and support mobility abroad, contacts, exchanges, and meetings at the international level; to promote mutual tolerance and intercultural sensitivity among young people and adults; to support the informal process of European integration in our community. In addition, InCo Molfetta activities propose to create intercultural abilities and non-formal competences for all the participants.

InCo-Molfetta believes in a world without prejudices, where every culture gets exploited, recognizing weakness and strength points, without any discrimination. The association supports non-formal education in general such as mobility abroad, courses regarding European projects, ICT and language workshops, entrepreneurship, group work on particular topics, and seminars in public schools regarding European mobility, the dual system of study/work at school, etc... To reach its objectives, InCo-Molfetta creates opportunities for volunteering abroad, international exchanges, training courses in Italy and abroad, as well as promotion and organization of mobility projects. The organization operates thanks to several programs, such as the ESC programme, Erasmus+, Europe for Citizen Programme, and local/national grant.

The people turning to the organization are usually youngsters or adults in a state of need, who are looking for new challenges in their life, such as experience abroad, a new job, new opportunities, and new skills. We provide them with informal courses and career guidance according to their attitude and motivation. Associazione InCo-Molfetta is a member of the local youth center network, the "Agenda XXI" forum, and the committee "Molfetta Accogliente", which takes care of the needs of immigrants. Important national partnerships are taken with: Associazione InCo (Trento), "Associazione Molfettesi nel Mondo", the public youth centers coordinated by "INFORMA", the most important high schools from the city and the municipality of Molfetta

ABOUT SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED BY YOUTH COACHES

The Supported Employment services, developed by the LAG AGRO LIDER, InCo Molfetta, and Associazione Tineri pentru Comunitate Bistrita, have emphasized integrated work with employment supports, based on assisting disadvantaged young people in getting a job. This initiative arose out of the need to provide equal opportunities and to combat social exclusion among:

- Youngsters with social deficits or fewer opportunities;
- Youngsters with e ducations/learning deficits;
- Youngsters with psycho -social/psychological deficits;
- Youngsters with multiple kinds of these deficits.

The supported employment services by youth coaches focus on providing employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth through long-term job coaching support according to their interests, strengths and needs while addressing issues that could affect young people's work or personal life. The supported employment services covers One-on-One Supported Employment services which include:

Supported Employment Services	NGOs introduce the supported employment services provided by the youth coaches who assist young beneficiaries in getting a job
Assessment and Job Preparation	Youth coach assists young people in developing work-related skills, attitudes, behaviors, and functional capacities to successfully achieve employment goals.
Resume, motivation letter, job i nterview	Youth coach assists in writing a professional resume and motivation letter. Youth coach uses educational tools to equip the young beneficiaries with skills that make them well prepared for their job interview
Soft skills and core work skills	Youth coach uses non-formal education tools to strengthen the soft skills and core work skills of the young people as their clients
Job Match & placement	Youth coach makes a job analysis, is involved in a job acquisition and creates a strategy for establishing effective entry into a job.
Job Coaching and Support Services	The youth coach assists disadvantaged young people with learning new job tasks and helps them understand job culture and industry practices in order to ensure long-term success on the job.



CORE PRINCIPLES

Core Principles of the supported employment services are:

- ✓ All young people have the right to work and be entitled to equal access to employment in the general workforce
- ✓ Zero exclusion
- ✓ Disability etiquette
- ✓ Job seeker strengths, interests, and talents
- ✓ Full inclusion of young people in the labor market
- ✓ Young people self-determination and empowerment



YOUTH COACH

Youth coaches are the pivotal figures in supported employment services. Their knowledge and skills are indispensable to developing careers for disadvantaged young people while offering support and avail to instill hope and promote employment, integration, and social development. The youth Coaches use their knowledge and experience of job development to address the beneficiaries' job expectations and coordinate various support measures that are helpful to both the employer and the employee.

Youth coaches should:

- Possess **soft skills** such as Leadership skills, Team working skills, Decision-making skills, Negotiation skills, Communication skills, Presentation skills, Networking skills, Time management skills, and Digital skills.
- Implement acquired knowledge and **professional skills** to
 - o Understand the role of supported employment services, Apply empathy, respect and trust and understand the helping process,
 - o Apply basic mentoring/coaching techniques to students and young people,
 - o Demonstrate the ability to ask questions
- Open/close and direct/indirect and use supportive skills while conducting an intake job interview.
- Acknowledge new knowledge and ability to **Identify, Understand, Analyze and Describe Labor Market Information.**
- Collect, organize, disseminate and provide up-to-date career, educational and training information.

Increase participants' **employability skills**, including their abilities to

- Identify strengths and weaknesses for a given job/internship position,
 - Guide a client through a job search process using non-online and online-based resources,
 - Demonstrate the ability to help a client complete job application forms, and
 - Guide them in preparing effective CV & Motivation letter.
- Apply new approaches and tools to **develop and deliver employability coaching services** supporting them with abilities to
 - Design, develop, and deliver short training sessions to groups of clients on career guidance topics, access to career information,
 - prepare application forms for an internship/job,
 - effectively interview for an internship/job,
 - Organize short training sessions with guest speakers from companies and public institutions and
 - Develop training materials.



Youth coaches need to have knowledge and skills to conduct employee assessments as part of their coaching programs. These assessments check for understanding and allow youth coaches to demonstrate their skills before working directly with young people from vulnerable groups.

The Youth Coaches provide professional guidance to the disabled/disadvantaged jobseeker/employee and the employer. A competent Youth Coach is paramount in creating a set of proper incentives and ensuring smooth coordination between different services involved is in place. Youth coaches offer support in the process of employment. Once the young beneficiaries enter the labor force, youth coaches continue to support them to ensure success in the workplace.

The top three clusters driving the success of the supported employment coaching process are:

- The relationship (trust, confidentiality)
- Characteristics of the youth coach (knowledge and experience, objectivity, honest feedback, listening activity, credibility, empathy, ability in targeting developmental areas, success in triggering new behavior)
- Characteristics of the beneficiary (willing beneficiary, understanding that supported employment coaching is an ongoing cycle of goals and desired outcomes, plans actions, learning opportunities, reflections, and retries that ultimately lead to greater competence)

Components of Supported Employment services

The following components are integral to the provision of high fidelity supported employment:

- Services are person-centered and culturally sensitive.
- Initial assessment completed to identify strengths, abilities, and interests. It involves discovery and career profile through developing individual career and perspective plan.
- Plan for employment drafted together with the beneficiary. Additionally, support is available for resume building, interview skills, and strengthening the soft skills and core working skills.
- Individualized job search with beneficiary based on individual's assessment, preferences, and informed choice
- On-site job coaching and support are part of the strategy.
- Follow-along supports provided to employer and employee



STEPS IN PROVIDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Providing supported employment services can be challenging, but it is a well-worth investment for any civil society organization to expand their support programs and services and create an opportunity for people in need in the community. The NGOs and youth are encouraged to design services that concretely cover how they will assist their beneficiaries with the full suite of supported employment services they need to succeed.

STEP 1: NGOs design the supported employment program, which can take many forms, depending on the needs of the individuals enrolled. Providing SE services, the youth coaches work directly with the beneficiary during the entire employment process, helping them find and apply for work, interview, and once they get hired, perform their responsibilities effectively.

STEP 2: Develop a coaching program

The SE services undertake to empower individuals with the basic skills needed to find and maintain employment. Through training and in-person coaching session, youth coaches empower the young people/potential employees with the skills they need to be more competitive in the job market.

The coaching program is here to help young people – job seekers, in their quest to strengthen their soft skills, self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence, and the value of effort. Furthermore, they will master connecting with others, to possess a willingness to learn and adapt, listen and communicate effectively, think creatively, solve problems independently, self-manage at work, interact with co-workers and work in teams or groups. These core skills are crucial for employability, both to the recruiter and the potential staff member. The individual will know how to secure a job, retain employment and move flexibly in the labor market. They will also have to ability to engage in lifelong learning.

STEP 3: Individualized assessment and Career planning

Youth coaches use assessment tools to work on identifying young people who received SE services: basic skills, vocational or technical skills, core work skills, and professional skills.

Youth coaches use Individualized planning processes, including personal developing circles of support, and their relationship to career planning.

Individual assessment and Personal career profile development involves:

- Active participation and decision-making of the person served in the career planning process.



- Identify the impact of an individual's cultural and social background, including class, race, gender, culture, and ethnicity, as well as role in the family, and community, native and spoken language, and family income.
- Review individual records and collect pertinent information related to employment.
- Observe the individual in his or her current daily routines and environments.
- Explore non-work needs that may impact the achievement and maintenance of Employment outcomes.
- Assess the individual's preferred style of learning, work skills and tolerances, and preferred modes of communication
- Assist individuals to develop personal career goals and meaningful career plans- Make referrals to appropriate agencies, organizations, and networks based on individual career plans.

The process of evaluating the potential of a beneficiary for successful competitive employment is based on the following information:

- Interviews
- Informal observations
- Information gathering
- Interpretation of formal standardized evaluations,
- Behavioral assessment of skills and abilities

During this phase, the youth coach Identifies job seeker skills, job preferences, interests, strengths and abilities and engages them in job readiness activities. These activities may include resuming development or correction, goal setting, and practicing interviewing skills.

STEP 4: Job development

Youth coach is gathering and analyzing labor trend information, Identifying patterns in job markets and continuously updated information of jobs available. He/she works on job plans targeted to employers that involve:

- ✓ *gather current information about local job opportunities, including labor trends, employer needs, and job requirements.*
- ✓ *use local employment studies, conduct market surveys, research business groups, and other methods for updating information about employment opportunities in the local job market.*



- ✓ *Establish a communication and collaboration with public employment agency as an employment service*
- ✓ *target and identify types of businesses to contact based on the needs and interests of job seekers.*
- ✓ *maintain updated information on new area businesses, type of jobs available, and locations of job sites within the community.*

Youth coach considers a variety of approaches to job development including contacting employers and building networks to develop and /or identify job opportunities, providing access to information about current job openings, completing a worksite analysis, inquiry letters, etc.

The organizations that provide supported employment services are recommended participation in community business organizations in order to establish communication and receive assistance in developing business relationships with employers.

In this stage, youth coach provides services that:

- Maximally involving job seekers in the job search process,
- including participation in completing job applications,
- establishing contacts with local employers,
- obtaining job interviews.

The youth coach works with the beneficiary to teach job-seeking skills so that they can be an ACTIVE part of the job search as to increase the opportunity for successful job placement. This is ongoing process in which Youth coach and the SE-services' beneficiary has regular meeting times in order to keep motivation of the beneficiary to be engage in the employment process and to reevaluate the direction supported employment services are heading.

STEP 5: Job Match & Placement

In this stage, the youth coach bridges the gap between the employment opportunities and employer need, and job seeker skills, capabilities, experience and interest. Youth coach uses an individualized person-centered approach to assist the person to identify, obtain, and/or advance in employment.

The youth coach:

- ✓ *evaluate the integration potential offered by a position, including physical, social, and cultural factors.*
- ✓ *determine effective methods to establish natural supports within work environments.*
- ✓ *list job duties and requirements of the job in sequence and the approximate time required to perform each task.*
- ✓ *identify and describe each job skill that an employee will be required to perform.*
- ✓ *prepare and communicate for the first day on job*



Youth coach in communication with beneficiary who receive supported employment services provides support if is need some “tailoring” of job duties or negotiations with the employer to make sure that the job position is appropriate to him/her skills and potential.

STEP 6. Ongoing support

Youth coach offers (if is need) ongoing support after the beneficiary is hired. The SE -coach collaborates with employees and employers to ensure successful employment, and support employee for job and/or career advancement. The youth coach (if is need) act as a coach for initial support to help the employee learn the work, duties of the job, work culture, while Maximizing worker job performance and social integration to ensure success. This is to set quantifiable goals, focus on certain job-related activities and to ensure that all parties involved are positively engaged in the process. The youth coach also provides coaching support when the job tasks change and the employee needs to become acclimated to new tasks.

STEP 7: Case closure

Once the worker is considered at a successful level of employment, a meeting is scheduled to successfully end Supported Employment Services. An evaluation and monitoring report, and an exit summary are prepared that describe supported employment services rendered, the result thereof, and make recommendations for continued achievement of the beneficiary's' goals.



MONITORING AND OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

The Monitoring and Outcome Measurement tool is developed to track specific information in order to help organizations which provide supported employment services to determine effectiveness, efficiency, and progress made for individuals receiving services.

The type of information that is collected includes:

- Typical demographic information - participants' ages, ethnic backgrounds, disabilities and residential areas
- Number of young individuals served and the types of services received
- Number of supported employment' closed cases and reasons for closure
- Number of new job placements
- Number of participants receiving benefits at work
- Job types
- Duration of supported employment services, Length of time between dates of referral and intake, intake and job placement, and job placement and case closure
- Number of individuals that remain employed
- Number of young people receiving supported employment services who increased their duties, are equipped with new professional skills, and/or increase wages and/or hours worked per week



RECOMMENDATIONS

Below you can find general recommendations for youth workers and professionals that wish to provide supported employment services with their target group:

- Supported Employment Services a process are both participant-centred and participant-led; there should be open and honest feedback between youth coach and participants
- Use People First and Identity First Language (PFL) which represents more respectful, accurate ways of communicating that describe what a person has, not who a person is.
- Use Individualized approach in the process of Negotiation with the businesses. It is important to meet the unique/specific needs of the employer and skills of the job seeker, one person at a time. One job—one person at a time.
- Continuously maintain updated information on businesses type of jobs available and locations of jobs within the community
- Developing and communicating effective marketing and messaging tools for employment
- Emphasizing building employment capacity rather than simply focusing on finding jobs for youth.
- Build a Partnership among young Job seekers, NGOs, and employers in order to determine the individualized strategies for providing support that will assist in career enhancement and ultimately facilitate long-term satisfaction for the job seeker and the employer.
- Ongoing review of the supported employee's performance is a crucial to ensure wellness and success in the workplace of young people.



CONCLUSIONS

The idea of the Youth Employment Initiative project emerged from the desire of three European organizations to support young people's success on the labor market, by reducing the number of young people who are not involved in education, employment or training (NEET) through supported employment services for vulnerable youth provided by youth coaches, and fostering young people's skills so they can integrate themselves better into society and the job market.

Youth Employment Initiative project and Supported employment services introduced have many benefits, both for the individuals who participate in them and for the NGOs that offer them. Supported employment services allow youth organizations to expand their services, helping young disadvantaged people attain more satisfying employment, gain economic independence and, in many cases, escape poverty. The youngsters improved their soft skills and work skills, participated in competitive employment and benefit from the dignity that arises from gainful employment.

The supported employment services by youth coaches focus on providing employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth through long-term job coaching support according to their interests, strengths and needs while addressing issues that could affect young people's work or personal life.

During these past 20 months, we have learned a great deal about what works in supported employment. We have also learned that there are many challenging implementation issues. The best mission statement, procedures, and other organizational structures may be in place, but the organization will be ineffective without knowledgeable and dedicated youth coaches who work well with individuals with disabilities and/or disadvantages, businesses, and the community at large.

Youth coaches are the pivotal figures in supported employment services. Their knowledge and skills are indispensable to developing careers for disadvantaged young people while offering support and avail to instill hope and promote employment, integration, and social development. Vital to supported employment services is the critical need for training across youth coaches assisting supported employment beneficiaries.

Through training of trainers, participants – youth coaches attending the training strengthened their skills to use an employee directed approach taking into consideration beneficiaries wants, needs and interests; equipped themselves with knowledge to coordinate strong community-based and personalized support focus on the holistic development of the individual; and began to view supported employment services as a drive force that will assist with career advancement and ultimately facilitate long-term job satisfaction. The training ensured that youth coaches possessed the competences necessary to provide quality supported employment services, because the qualified, well trained youth coaches are vital to the success of supported employment program.

While supported employment services can take different forms depending on the needs of the individuals enrolled in them, they all focus on empowering individuals with the basic skills they need to find and maintain employment. As we review the progress that supported employment services



developed within the frame of the YEI project have been made to date, there is a reason to feel encouraged. Youth coaches provided person-centered and culturally sensitive services through developing individual career and perspective plan, followed by plan for employment drafted together with the beneficiary, individualized job search with beneficiary based on individual's assessment, preferences, and informed choice and On-site job coaching and follow-along support if were needed.

Youth coaches engaged young people who were experiencing a range of problems and encouraging them to be involved in supported employment program. They provided support in a flexible way that was appropriate to the needs of beneficiaries, helping young people to set goals for themselves, and to work toward these in a planned way while breaking down barriers to employment. Young people from vulnerable groups who received supported employment services provided by youth coaches beginning to be more empowered, actively participated in the labor market and achieve a gainful employment and community integration.

The Youth Employment Initiative project was a great opportunity for both, the youth coaches and the youngsters to increase their relational skills, and to grow personally and professionally. The project was focus on independence and integration of young people through supported employment services that include a participant-centered and participant-led approach with an honest and confidentially relationship between the youth coaches and the young people. It has promoted inclusion, equal access to employment, young people' choice and involvement, young people' empowerment, a career paths, and the opportunity disadvantaged young people to be employed in the most efficient way possible. All parties involved as youth coaches, young beneficiaries, businesses and the community benefit from supported employment services introduced within the Youth Employment Initiative project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our special thanks of gratitude to Mr. Christoph Schreiner and Ms. Waltraud Schouber (Wien Work, Austria) for their able guidance and valuable insights in introducing Supported Employment Services for young people.

We would like to thank National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility for giving us the opportunity to perform this project.

