

SOLIDAR EU TRAINING ACADEMY 2015

July 6th and 7th 2015

International Training Centre of the ILO

Turin, Italy

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DOCUMENTATION

The Training Academy contained of five blocks, including two inputs from experts and three working group sessions covering different topics related to unemployment and measures in Europe, social work in member organisations, austerity policy, project management and future projects. The main objectives of the Training Academy were to create a good learning environment in an interactive way and to promote the exchange of experiences, good practices and networking between participants. This documentation includes the slides of the presentations and the list of all participants.

Monday 6/7/2015: Unemployment measures, austerity and social work provided by member organisations

The first day of the Training Academy was opened with a SOLIDAR introduction and policy contextualisation from SOLIDAR's point of view. The participants were introduced to each other.

The idea of the day was to evaluate the present structures and acts in order to form a basis for the next days' planning sessions. Therefore Ms. Pages of the ILO's International Training Centre introduced the facts and figures on labour market integration of long-term unemployed and NEETs, member organisations presented their current work to each other and Ms. Antonucci discussed austerity policy.

Block 1: Facts and figures on labour market integration of long-term unemployed and NEETs

In the first block Naima Pages, trainer in ITC ILO, Employment and labour marker department, presented the framework of research and categories within unemployment policy. The insight contained information about the measures and definition of different unemployment figures, unemployment comparison of EU and US and finally some policy recommendation in order to increase the employment rate. Afterwards there was a short discussion on unemployment and particularly the situation of the NEETs. The slides of the presentation are available [here](#).

Block 2: Social work in member organisations

Participants were divided into groups in order to share experiences. Each explained to others the following points:

- Current projects and their goals, methods, partners and acts.
- Project plans – next steps
- Barriers and how they were tackled
- Achievements and lessons that have been learnt
- Best practices
- Needs, what should be done next

After the round participants created together a picture to show what they do have in common.

Questions for the round were:

- Great achievements
- What do we have in common
- Obstacles to our work, what is preventing us and how to overcome them
- Future cooperation

The results

All three groups put together their common work, goals and achievements. The overall goals and obstacles were somewhat similar. The main issue is the future of the funding.

The first group created a visual list of greatest, common achievements. First, they pointed out that organisations are bridging the generation gap and bringing people together over generational differences. This creates cohesion and mutual learning in the society. Secondly, organisations break down racial conflicts through learning. Third, organisations are changing lives – through education, reducing isolation and providing new life skills. Finally, this all means that they are creating opportunities and improving well-being of others.

The second group prefer to compare their organisations. They also assist people in need, let the focus be in elder or those trying to get back to work. The organisations are fighting against poverty and inclusion of people.

The third group focused on volunteering aspect even though volunteers are an important part of most of the organisations daily work. The group combined in their circular listing different age groups and immigration, offering second chance to those in need, promoting integration and inclusion through trainings and recognising also non-formal education and knowledge.

The outcome of the working groups did raise the fact that the work in different countries and organisations come together with similar problems, achievements, challenges and values at the bottom of the daily work. The participants were delighted to see European level picture of social work in order to promote the possibilities of everyone in the society and fighting against poverty and austerity.

Block 3: Alternatives to austerity

Dr. Lorenza Antonucci attended SOLIDAR's Social Lab and brought greetings from their academic discussion to the Training Academy. She introduced the big picture of budget cuts and their effects for the public sector, the NGO sector, work and life conditions and finally to private life and families. In her brief and effective presentation she did show how austerity policy affects each of these sides of the society. Eventually it puts most burden on the private life and on families due to the decrease of welfare benefits and services, capacity of NGO's to compensate them, precarisation of work life and less different means of support and benefits for individuals.

Moreover, the discussion went on to a set of economic alternatives of austerity. Increasing investments and supporting domestic and European demand capacity through benefits and salaries would help tackle recession instead of regressive austerity prolonging lack in demand capacity and recession.

Both discussions did help the participants to place their everyday work into a European economic context. Participants could see similar national ideological and practical challenges. Therefore the overall outcome of the discussion was that in addition of grass root level work as well as the economic and power structures need to be changed at European and national level. This requires strong international cooperation, committed work, clear goals and continued everyday work together.

Tuesday 7/7/2015: Project management and future project planning

The second day of the Training Academy focused on project management and future project planning. The morning opened up with highlights of the previous day. Participants shared their lessons learnt with each other. Eva-Maria Schneider from SOLIDAR introduced SOLIDAR's fact sheet on service provision to long-term unemployed and the paper was shared with everyone. At the end Conny Reuter, secretary general of SOLIDAR, said the farewell words.

Block 1: Project management

The first half of the day was organised through the open space method. Different spots were placed in the corners of the room and participants walked around in order to contribute to each paper. The questions in each corner were:

- Funding: how to find money?
- Methods: how to know, what to do? How to do it?
- Leadership and sharing tasks: what is leadership? How to inspire and motivate?
- Partners: who are relevant? How to find them?
- Goal setting: what do we want? How to set relevant goals?

After the open space discussions the attendants were divided into groups. Each group chose one specific topic. During the group work they went more deeply into their field and prepared a presentation for the others.

The results

Funding

The group did explain inspiring examples and ideas for suggesting new means of funding. Networking and open dialogs with potential partners and funders are relevant – and identifying them.

First, a big question is a part of private donors. For example there could be a group of volunteer, private donators, who would contribute the amount of e.g. 0,005 % of their taxes. How to promote their identification as volunteers? One visible but also symbolic way is to create membership cards. Also different easy campaigns and projects for individuals to donate and also take part support emotional and effective commitment. Several member organisations have effective network of volunteers who contribute trough action.

Timebank / time of bank is non-monetary system of exchange of favours. That can be valid in creating volunteer networks, however, monetary funding must then be secondary.

Secondly, in addition to individuals as private funding donors also various organisations and companies should be reached. Trendy corporate responsibility was discussed in the context of communicating meaningful means to donate. Several member organisations have good experience of project cooperation with private companies.

Thirdly, also the role of federal, regional and local authorities was discussed. Several member organisation have experience of project partnership with authorities. Finally, European level (e.g. European social fund) was briefly discussed on the context of international cooperation of member organisations and SOLIDAR.

Methods

The group did explain to others good steps in identifying good methods for the project. Choosing, evaluating and implementing appropriate methods require a logical framework and tight but flexible time and activity plan.

Firstly, market research, surveys, evaluation of the methods used elsewhere, changing ideas within the network and discussions with focus group together with theories of the field provide a context for choosing an appropriate method for the particular purpose. Second, volunteers and managers need to be trained.

Leadership and sharing tasks

Is leadership an onion? Will it open up surface by surface – and sometimes makes one cry? Why not put it that way! In such case change, strengths and resources definitely are parts of those surfaces.

Leadership is the capacity to unite people, working together and motivate them with common objectives and goals. Finding that capacity is a learning process. It requires smooth coordination, resources management, taking initiative but also let initiatives to come. Others need to get a

change; to be able to try. Therefore it is crucial to trust people, to delegate tasks that are suitable, reasonably challenging and very meaningful. Trust is built on mutual responsibility and communication.

It's not possible to delegate without trust but also without responsibility.

Development is one means for motivation but also for reaching common objectives and goals more effectively. Such requires identifying strengths in others and promoting them while also identifying weaknesses and promote change through training.

Finally: have fun!

Partners

It depends on the project which partners are needed. Aspects to consider are funding, academic knowledge, practical contribution, industrial interests and the public. Thus relevant organisations can be e.g. companies with strong corporate responsibility, private-public partnerships, similar organisations or public organisations. All in all relevant are clearly those partners that are looking at the same area.

Finding partners is a practical task. Networks are one answer – and of course SOLIDAR helps finding relevant partners!

Goal setting

The group divided goals into two groups: general and specific ones. First, general goals include giving services and building a solid structure. Second, creating specific goals for a particular purpose begins with answering to two questions: who and how.

Goal setting should involve relevant groups, let it be students, seniors, parties, other people or other organisations, private or public. Goal setting is a process to build involvement and commitment. Impact is assessed on the point of view of different groups involved in the project. Goals should be clear to everyone involved and they should be in the form that can be analysed later on.

The methods for appropriate goal setting are dialog and research. Discussions with relevant partners and the focus group should be continuous also for elaborating the goals. Research refers to assessment of focus groups but also to knowledge in existing theoretical knowledge of the field.

Block 2 Future project planning

The aim of the last block of the training was aimed to formalise common ideas for the next project. Such wishes were already indicated during the previous session. The planning started with long term and big picture defining of few major trends, such as everyday consequences of inequality and climate change.

Finally, the questions for the first planning sessions were to formalise *goals* on how all or the most important of the following issues should be in 2040:

- How are power relations at work places?
- What kinds of parties rule?
- Is there collective bargaining?
- What is the equality level of the society (school, infrastructure, money circulation, health care etc.) – "private is political"
- Is climate change proceeding rapidly?
- How is the international labour movement?
- Civil society, social capital, media?

After the first round the groups were asked to pick most relevant goals and suggest concrete solutions. A simple model of problem-solving was introduced. Finally, for the third round the task was to suggest concrete steps: what to do next.

The results

The groups did reach various levels in their planning. They explained their final outcome of each relevant issue.

The very last round was to suggest project ideas to a common discussion. The group decided together the most agreed topic for a common project. The groups most wanted to cooperate in the future to increase the value of education e.g. in the form of citizenship education. That was agreed to be the most relevant, since education is the way to change the societies. Such education should lead to more human citizens. Equally highly supported was the issue of green energy. Therefore the final outcome was to combine ecologically sustainable knowledge with citizenship education.

Other topics were related to better working life (reducing working hours), social system (through basic income), civil society (tools for direct democracy) and democracy in economic system (workers unite worldwide and change economic system).

Participants agreed to investigate what is currently going on in their organisations with regard to more human and value-based education, citizenship education and promoting ecological sustainability and get back to SOLIDAR. Later on the plan is to invite member organisations for concrete project planning based on current knowledge and experiences in member organisations.

Participants

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