

10 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Abeona

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
TO CARE LEAVERS' PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION



Erasmus+



La Plateforme Insertion



10 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION:

After a two-year programme, the 10 partners from the six countries decided to provide 10 recommendations concerning vocational integration of youth. Members of the Abeona team want youth workers from European countries and also abroad to be aware of the project so that they can use the tools which were created (promoted) and adapted to the different profiles of young care leavers during the project, in order to enhance the way that they broach youth vocational integration. All of the partners would like to share the recommendations with European bodies so that public policies better take into account the burning issue of fragile youth vocational integration.

All of the countries made recommendations regarding their own context and the way that they implement the tools based on feedback from social workers including managers and social workers that are mentioned on their national reports. To conclude the project, the 10 partners met one last time to work together on what they want to recommend regarding the results of the European evaluation report, which contains a quantitative section based on questionnaires and a qualitative section based on the comparison of the use of the tools within each country. They worked in collaboration during a workshop to draft these 10 recommendations, which were presented during the closing event in front of more than 70 people who were interested in the topic.

The recommendations below will be presented during several workshops, in particular during various Working Groups of the European Commission as well as during official days such as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

It goes without saying that these recommendations can be improved according to different local experiences and they can evolve over time, but they are the outcome of a two-year-long collaborative work that involved harnessing skills from different partners through an innovative programme.

Recommendations on Resources & Skills

1

Social workers should receive training on vocational integration during their initial training and throughout their professional career.

The first European report showed that youth workers do not receive sufficient training with regard to this subject, instead training focuses on social care in a narrower sense. However, though vocational integration is part of societal inclusion, more attention needs to be paid to this topic, especially when considering young care leavers, for whom finding a job is even more challenging given the other difficulties that they face. Moreover, vocational integration is an ever-changing topic, thus the reason for ongoing training throughout their whole career.

2

Create a platform (open to the public) with the direct involvement of care leavers themselves, making all tools available and integrating the state-of-the-art coming from practice.

Youth workers especially appreciate the operational aspect of ABEONA, *i.e.*, the fact that they can use tools which are easy to appropriate. They all highlighted a lack of means to broach vocational integration with youth and therefore would welcome a collaborative platform in order to learn about new tools. The platform would be on-line and every stakeholder could feed into the tool kit, it would include a chat function so that users can directly share the advantages and disadvantages of the tools as well as present their own adaptations. Moreover, it could be a way to continue the project and roll it out in other countries.

3

Businesses should be involved as partners in the vocational integration programme.

Businesses can bridge the gap between youth and the business world and even provide internships for the young care leavers. Generally speaking, public policy related to vocational integration is not developed with the involvement of businesses and so the former are rarely adapted to the needs of the latter. Furthermore, were businesses to play a role in the development of public policy, they would be able to tailor said policy to their needs, thus resulting in a win-win situation.

4

Provide opportunities in order to enable social workers to exchange about their specific practices.

Not a lot of time is dedicated to vocational integration within the schedule of a youth worker. Given that their daily work is particularly difficult, they need to exteriorise and talk about how they are feeling, especially when this is related to an issue for which they have received little training. This recommendation aims to promote the use of the platform, develop new materials and allow youth workers to exchange about their empirical use of the tools and share the advantages and disadvantages of their own adaptation. Organising exchanges between social workers in different countries will broaden their practices. All of the Abeona stakeholders appreciate discovering new ways of working and learn by observing their peers abroad.

Recommendations on Implementation and Assessment

5

Our vocational integration tools package shall be shared to all the structures and social service & institution managers must be at the forefront of roll out of these tools.

The evaluation report highlighted the fact that the success of implementing the tools and more widely the importance of the topic of vocational integration within an institution, largely depends on the extent of the manager's involvement.

Sharing the Abeona toolkit would allow the topic to be addressed within social services and youth workers would have the opportunity to verbalise their needs to their managers and discuss difficulties faced regarding youth vocational integration and find solutions collectively.

6

Residential services must be encouraged & evaluated by authorities with regard to whether they provide good preparation for youth vocational integration.

In order to encourage social service managers to implement vocational integration tools in the daily practices of social workers, authorities should emphasise the importance of the subject.

If governments were to prioritise the topic by making it compulsory to address vocational integration when dealing with young care leavers (through the use of innovative tools), it would encourage social services to also dedicate time to it. Evaluating these actions would maximise the efficiency of this measure. To encourage this practice, authorities could grant more subsidiaries to structures that have the best practices and use them as benchmarks.

7

To clearly assess and evaluate the impact of vocational integration on young care leavers.

This recommendation falls within the general European Union trend of evaluating public policy programmes in order to ensure that the latter meet the specific needs of the users. It is crucial that the increasing lack of resources be evaluated in order to ensure future optimal use of resources. In order to assess the impact of such a programme it would be worthwhile to carry out an evaluation biennially (in order to allow the actors sufficient time to appropriate tools and methods), involving several actors including young care leavers themselves, with a clear, defined method inspired by the results of the ABEONA questionnaires.

8

One European Quality Label should be promoted to certify the work of organisations in the vocational integration field.

The Label would create keen interest from structures working in the field as it would allow them to gain visibility and legitimacy vis-à-vis other actors. Being awarded the Label could also give the beneficiary access to other advantages such as further funding.

Furthermore, those sitting on the panel awarding the Label would be able to provide best methodologies to address vocational integration. This in turn would create a network of experts working together within a European organizational framework.

9

A European Network should be established in order to collect good practices and develop solutions such as new tools.

To be efficient, European policies must meet the needs of the practitioners in the field as closely as possible; a European Network could fulfil this role of bridging the gap between the two. If policies were co-constructed by those who are working on a daily basis with youth facing difficulties related to vocational integration, they would without a doubt be more efficient. The primary reports showed that European policies are disconnected with the empiric reality: setting up a European network including different actors, even the youth themselves, would be relevant to more effectively fulfil their needs.

A European Network would provide an impetus for those working within the field of vocational integration by promoting news tools, sharing a newsletter, and highlighting difficulties being faced by social structures and youth workers. This will allow provide the dynamic necessary to ensure that the ways in which vocational integration is addressed is constantly being adapted depending on new labour market cyclical data.

10

Set up an international day in order to acknowledge social workers who promote new ways to tackle the issue of vocational integration

Organise special conferences and events at which youth social workers could be involved to share their innovative practices with other workers in the field. As their daily work is particularly hard it is important to emphasise their decisive role concerning the future of young care leavers.

Bring to the fore the ones who constantly reinvent their practices and pay attention to the changing economical context, which is crucial when considering a dynamic evolution of the social field.

Abeona

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
TO CARE LEAVERS' PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION



Erasmus+