

SECOND NATIONAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2017

Abeona

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
TO CARE LEAVERS' PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION



Erasmus+

AUSTRIA



La Plateforme Insertion



Federación de Entidades con Proyectos y Pisos Asistidos



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction..... 3
- 1. Overview on trainings and implementation of the tools 5
 - 1.1 Implementation of the tools within the services of BTG 6
 - 1.2 Adaptions of the tools 6
 - 1.3 Consciousness regarding the topic vocational integration 9
 - 1.4 Knock-on effects on youngsters 9
 - 1.5 Needed tools and further activities..... 10
- 2. Fact and Figures about the Association of Therapeutic Communities (BTG)..... 11
- 3. Youth Worker Exchange Report 11
 - 3.1. Vocational integration and Abeona tools in the hosting organisation 12
 - 3.2 Other vocational integration activities discovered in the hosting country..... 15

Introduction

FICE Austria is partner in the European project called ABEONA funded by the ERASMUS+ programme (2015-2017). The project sets out to identify young Care Leavers' needs and to transfer best practices in their support for vocational integration. The overall aim is to foster care leavers' professional integration.

While young people, who live with their parents, often stay at home with their families until their mid-twenties or even longer, young people living in residential care are generally forced to start their independent life much earlier. Different observatories on social matters for youth have raised awareness about the lack of specific help for young care leavers regarding their vocational integration and their transition into an independent adulthood. Indeed, these youngsters are facing psychosocial obstacles (lack of family support, low self-esteem, early school leaving, among others), which constitute barriers to their social and vocational integration when leaving the care sector.

Youth workers often face difficulties to engage in long-term life projects with the young people, especially vocational ones. Often, they lack the necessary tools and methodologies to provide efficient support concerning vocational integration. The ABEONA project gathered a consortium of nine organisations from six European countries aiming at creating trainings and tools for European youth workers to support young Care Leavers' transition into the labour market.

In the first phase of the ABEONA project, the current situation of Care Leaver and their vocational integration in the partner countries was analysed and described in National Reports. (All National Reports and the European Report can be found on the ABEONA project website: www.abeona-project.com). Based on the findings on needs and best practices in the support of Care Leavers in their transition to a socially and vocationally integrated life, the project consortium developed tools and a training for youth workers they can use in their work on these topics with youngsters in care or young care leaver.

In November 2016, the tools and methodologies developed were taught in Austria in three workshops to participants from FICE Austria member and other organisations in Austria, who provide care for children and youth and support young Care Leaver.

This evaluation report aims to analyse first results and feedbacks of different stakeholders engaged in the ABEONA project with a special focus on one member organisation of FICE Austria, the Association of Therapeutic Communities Austria (BTG). The report consists of the analysis done by FICE Austria (Chapter 1) and by a youth worker from Plataforma Educativa - project partner from Spain - who came for a five days youth worker exchange to Austria (Chapter 3). The youth worker and the project manager from FICE Austria did semi-

structured interviews with the manager of BTG, workshop trainers, social pedagogues and psychologists, who participated in the workshops and started to implement the tools within their services. The last part of the report reflects the impressions of the youth worker from Plataforma Educativa he had visiting other Austrian projects and vocational integration measures for Care Leaver or young people in general.

1. Overview on trainings and implementation of the tools

FICE Austria organized three workshops for professionals, who are working in child and youth care and/or with (future) Care Leaver. The first workshop was held in Bruck/Mur addressed to employees of TC Steiermark that forms part of the BTG. The second and third workshop took place in Vienna and Salzburg and were open to participants from BTG and other FICE Austria's member and partner organisations all over Austria. Two trainers, who participated in the development of the training in Louvain-la-Neuve/Belgium, prepared and held the workshops.

In the workshops, several tools and methodologies were trained with special emphasis on the following two:

“How to (not) miss a job interview” (further “How to miss a job”)

This tool mainly consists of a role play. The youngsters/young adults prepare video equipment (or mobile phone) to tape the role play - a job interview in an office, responding to the single command: "What would you do to be sure to miss your interview?" Teenagers have a few minutes to decide on what they want to focus their presentation. The youth worker acts as the employer. Then each youngster is filmed without interruption. Later a debriefing takes place, where the videos are shown and discussed and the right techniques and good attitudes for a job interview identified.

River and collage. Assets important to my career and how to use them in future. (further “The River”)

The participants draw a linear representation of their life story – from a specific period to the present moment - a river divided into segments, which represent turning points. It is important to keep the chronology of the turning points, events and decisions, which had a significant impact on their private life in the context of potential vocational experience. Each participant shows his/her poster and everybody looks for the ‘assets’ in the river – people or events, which supported the author in the context of potential vocational roles. In a next step, the participants make a collage of their dreams, activities they like to do and careers they might be good at and then define goals and how to achieve them using the WDG (well defines goal) method.

An important part of the training was dedicated to exchange and discuss about vocational integration offers and measures for (future) Care Leaver in Austria and within the different regions. Furthermore, in the workshops in Vienna and Salzburg, an expert from the Federal Coordination Office Youth-Education-Vocational Integration gave an input about the initiative “AusBildung bis 18” of the Austrian government and the new compulsory education or training law, which says, that every person under the age of 18 must attend another school or do vocational training after compulsory school. He also presented an

overview on the measures taken and offered to young adults within the initiative, with special emphasis on Youth Coaching and low-threshold vocational integration offers.

The following evaluation focuses mainly on the implementation of the tools in BTG services. Interviews were made with the managing director and board members of BTG, the trainers, 7 social pedagogues and psychologists, who participated in the training and/or implemented the tools with youngsters.

1.1 Implementation of the tools within the services of BTG

The training with employees of TC Steiermark took place in the frame of their yearly employees meeting, that is to say nearly all employees participated in the training. At least one employee of each service of TC participated in the training in Vienna. The participants then shared the knowledge within their teams. The interviews were made a short period after the trainings. At that moment, the implementation of the tools has started in some services and some of the tools have been used in the work with the youngsters.

Four of the interviewed persons have made first experiences with the tool „How to miss a job“, implemented both in individual work with the client and in group-settings; two of them implemented „The River“, but only in individual work with the clients.

Generally speaking, the interviewed persons find the tools easy to familiarize with and easy to apply. None of the tools per se was rejected by the youngsters, but in some cases adaptations were necessary - especially to „The River“ - to be accepted by the youngsters.

Related to the application of “The River”, most of the interviewed persons mentioned their concern to use the tool without therapeutic guidance. Nearly all of them work with traumatized youngsters and/or unaccompanied minors; „The River“ is considered a good tool, but should be applied carefully with these target groups as the tool is supposed to lead to expose important events in the life of a person.

1.2 Adaptions of the tools

During the implementation, the tools were adapted regarding the actual situation of the youngsters, available resources as well as the needs due to their psychological state, age and interests.

Thus, the “How to miss a job” role play was adapted to work not only on vocational integration, but also on other topics relevant for the youngsters in that moment, like how to behave in a formal situation, attitudes, school, etc.

One interviewed person shared the experience, where the role play was used to show a youngster how his behaviour is received. The youngster has always been in a bad mood, showing lack of interest through his way of hanging around and answering the social

pedagogue. The social pedagogue used the same gestures and form of answering while communicating with the youngster. In this adaption, the role play was not taped, but the social pedagogue showed the youngster his behaviour like in a mirror.

As it was not always possible to gather a group of youngsters, the „How to miss a job“ role play was also used in individual work and has led to good experiences.

Due to the above mentioned concern of using “The River”, in one case the tool was adapted to only include positive aspects of life in the drawing, using the instruction „Draw only good moments in your life“ instead of “Draw the important moments in your life”. This helped the young person to become aware that there have been also good moments in life.

The River was also implemented with an adaption of the materials used. Especially male young adults are sometimes reluctant to drawing a painting. One of the interviewed persons has therefore changed the materials used - the young adult created the river in the nearby forest using materials found there like wood sticks and stones.

The tools can also be adapted to work with other persons from the environment of the youngsters, e.g. with the families. In one experience shared in the interviews the role play was applied to strengthen the behaviour of a family mother towards her children and husband.

1.2.1 Usefulness of the training and tools

Judging by the comments and feedback of the interviewed persons, the workshops and tools were well received by the participants. The following were the most frequently named comments regarding the workshops:

- (1) The presented tools and the input about the initiative “AusBildung bis 18” and the new compulsory education or training law as well as the overview on the offers and measures for vocational integration of young adults were very helpful.
- (2) The exchange and networking with participants from other organisations and service providers was especially important.
- (3) I feel better informed and I know where I can get more information on vocational integration opportunities for the youngsters I work with.
- (4) I am more conscious about the importance and got a new impulse to include the topic vocational integration in my daily work.
- (5) The workshop reminded me of already known tools and inspired me to use them again.

The interviewed persons also evaluated the presented tools positively: The tools are easy and not work-intensive as well as flexible and easily adaptable to different situations, contexts and topics. They are concrete, practical, not complicated and do not need a lot of explanation for their implementation. The tools do not seem strange to the youngsters and

are no hindrance for them. They awake the interest of the youngsters; especially the visualizing part of the tools makes the outcomes more comprehensible.

Comments on the tool **“How to miss a job”** referred to the importance of its humoristic aspect; it means fun for the youngsters and is interesting for them. It is something new and different – “to do something that I should not do”. Other comments emphasized that the tool can be used in group settings and in individual work. If used with more youngsters, the exercise is good for the group dynamic. It was also noted positively that the tool is somehow provocative – when seeing the own behaviour and what can be done worse. It helps to become aware of one’s own behaviour and helps the youngsters to overcome the fear to embark something new. It was also mentioned that the tool helps to practice behaviour and attitudes in formal situations.

Comments on **“The River”** emphasized on the drawing as an activity on a different level, which is sometimes easier for the youngsters than talking about their life. In addition, having a physical object as a result – a sheet of paper with the drawing - was noted positively. Often the youngster keep the drawing, which means that the topic is important for them and they are thinking about it. The drawing can also be kept by the professional and be used in a later moment to come back to the topic to see what happened meanwhile. All interviewed persons agree that the tool is helpful to make the youngsters aware of obstacles they faced on their way and what they did to overcome them; in that way they get to know their strengths and capacities that they can use to overcome future obstacles. It was also mentioned that the tool is suitable to start the work with a youngster, e.g. at the beginning of the placement/of a treatment and whenever there is a standstill in the development.

The only concern mentioned with regards to the tools, referred to “The River” and its use without therapeutic guidance as already mentioned above. Another point mentioned was that if a youngster/young adult „closed“ totally, the tools would not help or it would rather not be possible to use them.

Summarizing, the interviewed persons find the tools helpful - they can be integrated in the daily work - but are also seen as only one part of the process. It was also underlined that the process of consciousness raising is equally if not more important than having good tools at hand.

1.2.2 Potential improvement of the tools

Generally spoken, the interviewed persons agreed that the tools are easy to use and flexible enough to be adapted to different resources, contexts, situations, topics and needs of the youngsters and therefore do not need changes or improvements.

Nevertheless, some potential improvements for the instructions were mentioned, as for example to add the importance of repeating the exercises in some cases. Also, to add that the tools can be used to follow up the development process of a youngster (“The River”). At the beginning of a placement or treatment process, using “The River” can be helpful to get to know the person and important information about the person in one single exercise. At the end of the process, achieved goals can be shown as well as how obstacles on the way were overcome.

Regarding “The River”, it was also recommended to use it carefully and with therapeutic guidance for specific target groups.

1.3 Consciousness regarding the topic vocational integration

Within the services of BTG, vocational integration of youngsters has already been topic and to a certain extent part of the work with them, although sometimes unaware and often depending on the commitment of the individual social pedagogue. What has been done so far is supporting in CV and application writing, visiting job information fairs, helping to find a place for apprenticeship within the own or the organisation’s networks, supporting the young adults in their struggle to keep the studies or a job, and to help them overcome frustration if they fail to do so.

Normally the work on vocation integration has been done on individual basis with the youngsters starting when they reach the age, at which vocational integration becomes an important topic - normally in the 3rd/4th grade of high school, when the issue is also raised in school.

Sometimes vocational integration topics are discussed during common meals. It has also happened that the topic was raised and became important to a youngster, when another young adult from the group home started working, e.g. doing an apprenticeship.

Through the participation in the ABEONA project and in the workshops, the professionals got an impulse to work more structured on this topic and to research on vocational integration offers and measures on regional level. They are more conscious about the importance to include the topic in the daily work. The topic is now more present for professionals, but also for the youngsters.

1.4 Knock-on effects on youngsters

At this moment, it is not possible to measure effects on the youngsters’ behaviour or vocational integration as the implementation of the tools has only just started. Furthermore,

the tools are used as part of a process and effects cannot be linked solely to the implementation of the tools. Nevertheless, the interviewed persons have observed some effects directly connected with the activities:

After finishing the exercise “How to miss a job”, some of the youngsters wanted to repeat the exercise. They were very interested in the outcome - to see their own behaviour and body language. The youngsters were curious about the impression they give; how others see them and receive their behaviour and attitudes. The exercise made them think about their behaviour, helped to raise their self-consciousness and to improve their self-perception.

Another effect mentioned often, relating to the tool “How to miss a job”, was the fun factor - the exercise made the youngsters laugh and share their views more freely.

“The River”, applied with the adaption to draw only the good moments, made one of the youngsters aware that he has not been seeing anything positive in his life and now he is.

1.5 Needed tools and further activities

All interviewed persons agreed that it is very important to have complete information on vocational integration measures, services and offers for young adults, also on regional level, and contact information of the responsible persons. In addition, to be updated on new regulations, laws and new services offered.

Some of the interviewed social pedagogues proposed to have one person within the organisation or even in each team, who gathers all information and can be approached in the individual cases for information and advice.

Another important need mentioned was to continue the sharing of information, tools, methods, expertise and different experiences in meetings and workshops. This should be done internally within the organisation and with professionals from other organizations and service providers. Experts and responsible persons for vocational integration services and other help systems like youth coaches, AMS, etc. should also be invited. This may contribute to better communication and networking.

Some of the interviewed persons mentioned that sometimes they feel a lack of knowledge and consciousness about the special situation and specific needs of children and young people in care and Care Leaver among companies, AMS, youth coaches and even in schools. It would be important to improve the communication and exchange with other help systems to raise awareness about the specific situation of youngsters in care and to work together for their better vocational integration

In addition, the international cooperation was mentioned as important to bring in new ideas, practices and experiences that work in other countries.

The ABEONA project has given the impulse to work more structured on the topic of Vocational Integration. On the one hand by the development and implementation of concepts and further projects on the topic as well as capacity building. Within BTG workshops on the topic Vocational Integration of Care Leaver will be included in the further training programme for all employees. On the other hand by advocating for a change in the system that would allow young Care Leavers to come back or stay longer in the child and youth care system. This would give them the chance to have similar support during their vocational and social integration process as their peers who have the possibility to go back or stay longer in their parents' home and support.

2. Fact and Figures about the Association of Therapeutic Communities (BTG)

The Therapeutic Communities are a non-profit organisation founded in 1999. Their main emphasis lies on the provision of care and support services for male children and young adults from dysfunctional families with whom other institutions have failed or are failing. The strength lies in the individualised, continuous and disruption-free care for youngsters in family-like structures.

In residential group homes, highly qualified experts ensure that the clients can rely on a well-regulated daily routine, with the ultimate goal of preparing the children for an independent and socially integrated life.

As a non-profit association, the Therapeutic Communities are completely independent and not beholden to any party or superordinate organisation. The Therapeutic Communities as well as TG Steiermark form part of the umbrella organisation "Federal Association of Therapeutic Communities Austria". Therapeutic Communities and TC Steiermark together have currently approx. 160 employees.

The range of services provided includes socio-therapeutic group homes, a group home for unaccompanied minors, individual care service, assisted living as well as home teaching, a therapeutic centre and community based care in Micro TCs in the Therapeutic Communities and socio-pedagogic child, youth and family support, assisted living, a trauma therapeutic group home and psychological treatment offered by TC Steiermark.

The TC team is supported and advised on an ongoing basis by a range of experts in child protection and children's rights, children and adolescent psychotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, child and adolescent psychiatry and psychology.

3. Youth Worker Exchange Report

(Olaf Anguera, Plataforma Educativa, Spain)

3.1. Vocational integration and Abeona tools in the hosting organisation

In three workshops held in Austria to disseminate the ABEONA tools, special emphasis was put on the teaching of the tools “Life River” (further “The River”) and “How to (not) miss a job” (further “How to miss a job”).

The first workshop was addressed to youth workers from within the BTG organisation. The second and third workshop took place in Vienna and Salzburg and were open to youth workers from other entities. These meetings were also used to introduce a nationwide new law affecting all youngsters from 15 to 21 years old, their educational obligations and the public services provided by the government to ensure the law.

3.1.1 Implementation of the tools in the hosting organisation

Both tools were implemented in the hosting organisation BTG, “How to miss a job” in group and individual settings, “The River” only as individual activity.

Both tools have proved easy and fun to implement with the youngsters. Also, as both are easy to explain, youngsters have shown interest in taking part in them. None of the tools was rejected by the youngsters.

Recommendation on the tools

Regarding “The River”, the youth workers who attend youngsters with traumatic histories or refugees from wars, have argued that they would prefer not to use the tool with them unless there was a professional therapeutic guidance along. If the goal of the tool is to expose important events in the life of the person, anguishing elements could come out to the surface with these two groups of youngsters that would require some containment and elaboration from the professional.

One proposed variation of the tool was to give the youngster the premise to include only the positive aspects of life in the drawing: good experiences and helpful people. This was tried once and it helped the youngster become conscious that there had also been good moments in his life, not only bad ones. By using the tool this way, it seems that it could fit better the needs and situation of refugees and severely traumatised youngsters.

A noted benefit of this tool is that it produces a physical object (the sheet of paper with the drawing) that can be kept either by the youngster or the professional. If by the youngster, the effort he puts into keeping it shows the amount of importance it holds. If by the professional, it is a personal vision of the youngster that can be shown to him in the future if needed, to review his past or the evolvments in his perceptions.

For the “How to miss a job” tool, youth workers have found to be a hindrance the fact that it has to be run in a group, because of infrastructure difficulties. While the idea to shoot the individual videos and afterwards discuss them in group is well liked, the daily reality in the facilities is that it is not easy to gather the youngsters together and do a dynamic for a certain amount of time.

On the other hand, some youth workers have decided to do the role-playing and video individually with single youngsters, and the experience has led to good results. Thus, it seems that the tool can be used both - in group and individual dynamics.

Change in the youngsters’ behaviour

The interviewed youth workers have noticed an augment in the self-consciousness of the youngsters. Specifically the “How to miss a job” tool has been helpful in showing the youngsters how others see them and be aware of behaviours and attitudes that give a bad impression of them.

3.1.2 Adaption of the tools regarding the public in the hosting organisation

Adaption regarding the organization and the public

In several of the group homes, “The River” has not been used because of the traumatic issues explained before. Nevertheless, narrowing the premise from “draw the important moments of your life” to “draw only the good moments of your life” seems like a valid variation.

A psychologist also explained how the “Life River” was a tool she sometimes used during the first meetings with a youngster, in the last ones, and in critical moments in between. It allowed her to get to know some of the history of the youngster in a glimpse. In addition, drawing the river made the youngster see the bigger picture of his present situation during a crisis. When done at the end steps of the therapeutic relationship, it allowed reviving the goals achieved and the steps taken.

“How to miss a job” has been taken by some youth workers as an inspiration to re-think the usual role-playing. While it has not been easy to shoot the videos, the humoristic aspect has helped introduce the role-playing more frequently in the daily dynamics.

Adaption regarding the available resources in the organisation

None of the tools requires special or unavailable resources. Even the “How to miss a job” tool can be easily done with a mobile phone and a computer, both of which are available at every facility.

Adaption regarding the current steps forward of the youngster's life plan

While both tools can be easily adapted to the individual needs, "How to miss a job" has been the most adapted. Even by playing the situation of a job interview, it was in fact aimed at making the youngsters conscious of how they can look like in any formal situation.

This has allowed working with the youngsters their attitudes in every situation. For some of those youngsters, school and not work was the main issue, due to their age (below 15 years old).

Another situation played was the relationship to the youth worker himself, as a representation of the youngster's behaviour towards adults and professionals. This has been important for youngsters who are in a situation where they need to meet different professionals (psychologist, coach, different youth workers, etc.) and do feel uncomfortable with it.

3.1.3 Feedbacks of the youngsters regarding Abeona tools

While not being able to talk directly with youngsters about the tools, the youth workers report that the group dynamics have enjoyed and profited from doing such a humorous activity as the "How to miss a job". When done in group, it has made the participants laugh and share their views on each other's performance more freely.

Regarding "The River", not all youngsters have felt motivated to draw a picture. Teenage boys have been more reluctant to do the tool than girls or young kids. However, one of the youth workers had the idea to ask the boys, when individually going outdoors, to "build" the river using sticks, stones, and what was available to them on the field. The reaction was very positive to that alternative way of expression. Also, to remember the river, the youngster was told that he could choose an object among the ones used (a stone, a stick,...) and keep it. Some of the youngsters still keep those objects with them.

3.1.4 Consciousness regarding vocational integration within the organisation

By simply attending the workshops, the youth workers did get an input that the theme had to be contemplated in their plans with the youngsters. Moreover, the organisation itself, by organising the open workshops in Vienna and Salzburg, saw the opportunity and need to contact other partners and actors that play a part in the labour market integration of the youngsters in Austria. That allowed the organisation itself to get to know new services

provided by the Government related to youth employment (*detailed below, in point 3.2*) and disseminate them.

3.1.5 Needs identified in the organisation since the beginning of the Abeona project

The most common needs mentioned by the interviewed youth workers are:

- Having access to an overview of all services in the region available to youngsters, related to education, working learnings and social helps.
- Related to the first point, having a single person in the structure who is dedicated to know more deeply about those services, and who can be reached by the youth workers to follow the individual cases and direct them at the fitting resources.
- To take part in meetings and workshops with other youth workers or related professionals, to share expertise, and to use these meetings to be informed of new regulations, services, etc. available to the youngsters.

At this point, the structure is still implementing the tools in the different services, but has taken note of the good response of the participants to the different workshops, and the positive feedback that resulted.

It has also been noted, that this international exchanges have allowed to know of services, ways of working, educational services, professional figures, etc. that exist in other countries and fit the own needs. Being able to choose some of those experiences, getting to know them deeper and better, and disseminating them among the management of the different organisations, is proposed as one of the next steps to improve the services offered to the youngsters in care.

3.2 Other vocational integration activities discovered in the hosting country

3.2.1 Other Vocational Integration activities visited

AusBildung bis 18 and Youth Coaching

Due to a new law in Austria, the compulsory education or training law, that was passed 1 July 2016, every person under the age of 18 must attend another school or do vocational training after compulsory schooling. Compulsory education or training is at the heart of the AusBildung bis 18 initiative, an initiative of the Austrian Government aiming to prepare young adults better for future requirements of the labour market. It applies to all young people whose compulsory schooling ends in 2017.

The Government has promoted a series of institutions to ensure and facilitate that. During my visit, I was able to meet with representatives of the Coordination Office Youth-Education-Vocational Integration for Vienna (www.koordinationsstelle.at). There I was told about the actions they have done to implement this law, how and when they reach the youngsters that are not in an educational facility, and how they work with them.

Of special interest is the figure of the Youth Coach. There are several coaches, distributed among zones who go to the schools in a regular schedule. There, they meet the youngsters in their last year of compulsory school (those who want to) and help them choose what to do the following year. It is important to add that there are also specialized coaches available for specific populations: for youngsters with psychic illness, deaf or blind, with special educational needs, etc.

After some interviews and tests, the coaches figure out a certain direction for the youngster. They know and have available to them a listing of all educational services in the region, and can choose together with the youngsters which would fit better his/her expectations, needs, skills, etc. (http://www.koordinationsstelle.at/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/20170329_projektlandschaft_wien.pdf)

There are three tiers of intervention described for the coaches:

Tier 1 is general information to the youngsters about options, when they already have an idea of their wishes. This can take about 2 months, 3 to 5 hours of work.

Tier 2 includes a screening of the youngster's skills, and a help to allow him to decide where to aim his future education. This tier contemplates about 6 months of work, with a maximum of 15 hours.

Tier 3 is directed at youngsters, who have severe difficulties choosing their way, or who do not want to do anything at all. An intensive support and the agreement on objectives and goals is part of this tier. It can take up to 1 year of work and up to 30 hours.

It should be added here that some youth workers have already had an experience with the Youth Coaches, and it has not always been a good one. They have reported difficulties among the coaches with keeping in touch with the youngsters and the youth workers themselves, and in understanding or being able to find viable options for the youngsters in care, due to their special situation and needs. While the opportunity to have a reference person is theoretically a solution to some of their problems, the reality is that the utility of the Youth Coach is very dependent on the personality and sensibility of the professional him/herself.

spacelab

During the exchange week, I was also able to visit the facilities of one of the services where the Youth Coach can send the youngsters. It is called spacelab and is one of the services that

have very low requirements for the youngsters: it is directed at youngsters with great difficulties to attend to a job, follow a regular schedule, and/or receive theoretical education. spacelab has four facilities in Vienna, each one dedicated to one area of apprenticeship: outdoor (gardening, landscape planning, eco-cooking,...), creativity (photography, video, painting,...), building (construction, repairing, recycling,...), girls (various contents). It might be important to add that, according to the representative of spacelab, the reality is that youngsters go to the facility nearest to their living places, not really because of their interests.

The two main points that, in my opinion, make spacelab interesting: Firstly, there are no fixed requirements for the youngsters: they can show up and take part in the activities whenever they want, or leave of their own free will, and no one will punish or warn them for that. The second point is that the youngsters are paid for the hours spent there learning. It is a small amount, but it acts as a motivation to stay. Moreover, if they agree to a weekly plan with the coach and follow it, the amount received by hour increases.

When the youngsters are able to follow a routine, then they may enter a more regular program of education that lasts for 12 months and allows them to take up contact with different works and jobs.

Regional Meeting “Welcome to Life Project”

Additionally, I was able to attend the Tirolean regional meeting of the “Welcome to Life” project. In it, the main point was to collect and analyse the different offers available to young Care Leaver in Tirol regarding education, work and home. In addition, it was discussed what were the experiences with those offers (whether they worked or not), what could be done to improve their efficiency regarding Care Leaver, and what would be further needed in the region. While the “Welcome to Life” project has an even broader scope, this helps to see the importance of gathering knowledge regarding the services in all levels, and the fact that the function of those services does not always work when it comes down to Care Leaver or youngsters in care.

3.2.2 Why did you decide to analyse these vocational integration measures?

Both services give answer to some extent to the main needs expressed by the interviewed youth workers regarding vocational integration.

The Youth Coach represents the person, who concentrates the knowledge of the available resources in a region, related to vocational education and integration of youngsters. Besides, the websites of the Coordination Offices Youth-Education-Vocational Integration have available the description and requirements of every service offered in the regions. It represents the gathering of information required by the youth workers.

spacelab, while only existing in the Vienna area, can be a suitable option for youngsters that still can't enter a regular work education because of extra difficulties with the language, emotional stress, behaviour problems, etc., such as many of the youngsters from BTG are. At least for a time, it can allow them to earn a bit of money, be kept busy, and learn new skills and competences that can help them enter the job market in the future.

3.2.3 Which of these measures would you like to implement in your country and why?

The figure of the Youth Coach is a very important one, and one that is a requirement for an effective work in the vocational integration of youngsters. A similar figure is present in the city where I work (*Via Laboral* in Girona/Spain), but the person belongs to our structure, not to the Administration. He is very useful to us, as Girona is not a big city and he is able to have contacts with the different services offered there. In addition, being part of our structure, he only works with youngsters in care and is fully conscious of their situations, difficulties and needs. This also applies to the services he directs the youngsters to.

Nevertheless, for bigger cities or regions, probably a larger and organized network of coaches would be necessary to reach everyone, and this is usually beyond the scope of most private structures.

As for spacelab, while there is an educational service with low requirements in Girona also addressed at youngsters (*Prepara't*), they do require a regular attendance and the students are not paid for their time. New services more similar to spacelab in some aspects are beginning to appear in Girona (*Garantia Juvenil*), but still do not have the flexibility of it.

Abeona

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
TO CARE LEAVERS' PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION