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Between August 29th and September 1st, 2007, eleven representatives of all DYACIT partner organisations and external evaluator met in Naples, Italy, to discuss the work carried out in the first half of the project.

The main products achieved in the first year of the projects were:

1. Curricula for workshops – 3 curricula for English, Adobe Photoshop and photography have been developed at the beginning of the project, representing the basis for the material that has been presented within the workshops.
2. Creative Lab (training workshops - 3 groups, working in pairs (SREP+ARIES; Znanie+Bfw; SREP+Znanie) were organised in the time interval February – June 2007.
Each partner will carry out the workshops in their native tongue and in English (at the English workshops);
3. 3 virtual photo exhibitions - the 3 groups of young people working in pairs have developed a common exhibition. The first 3 exhibitions developed by the teams that worked in pairs is available online on the website of the project in English - <http://www.srep.ro/dyacit/galleries.php>
4. Site of the project - Information on activities developed within the project, objectives, partners, meetings, virtual photo exhibitions, etc.- <http://www.srep.ro/dyacit>
5. Evaluation report on the first year of workshops

Creative Lab—training workshops:



The partners from four countries participating in the project – Romania, Bulgaria, Germany and Italy, combining photograph workshops, digital photo processing and English, involving 63 young people in risk of being “early school leavers”, in the time interval February – June 2007.



The participants in the first round of workshops were:



ARIES, Italy

- ⇒ Students 16 – 21 years old
- ⇒ Students coming from different schools
- ⇒ Boys belonging to a very difficult social background

BFW, Germany

- ⇒ Students 16 – 20 years old (17 boys and 3 girls)
- ⇒ Young drop-outs, mostly without secondary school certificate and / or professional qualification
- ⇒ Many of them juvenile delinquents

ZNANIE, Bulgaria

- ⇒ Students 16 – 19 years old (Students in secondary school, 2 of them – in General Education Schools, and 18 – in Secondary Vocational schools in transport and mechanics).
- ⇒ cooperate with a center for prevention of children dropping out of school.
- ⇒ most of them have lower marks and drop out of school before graduating

SREP, Romania

- ⇒ Group 1 (with BG): young people with disabilities aged 16 – 20. Some of them have graduated from a special school for people with special needs. Most of them would like to re-enter the educational system (to continue their studies), but are disappointed by the opportunities existing for the disabled.
- ⇒ Cooperate with “H Foundation”, Bucharest
- ⇒ Group 2 (with DE): young people aged 17 – 20 coming from poor families, most of them having completed 10 grades.



Applied methodology

All the four applied methodologies are based on the idea that the new learning environment has to distinguish itself considerably from the normal school experience, which in most cases has been perceived by the target group involved as having a negative impact.

The methodological approach aimed at:

- being tailor-made to individual educational needs of participants;

- having to take into account different levels of skills (IT, RO);
- theoretical Inputs connected with practical elements
- stressing voluntary work as opposed to obligation;
- being learner –centered, and
- including many team work elements.

Evaluation method

Two questionnaires were used at the beginning of the workshop implementation phase: one to evaluate participants' motivation and expectations with regard to the course, and another to describe the methodological approach to be taken by the trainers involved.

The results of the ex-ante evaluation were presented in “Interim evaluation report of the first round of workshops”, May 2007.

The main conclusions of this exercise were:

- ◆ Expectations among participants were very high. They expected to

learn new skills and have fun while learning.

- ◆ There were concerns about communication in English with peers from other countries.
- ◆ The level of basic IT skills varied considerably and therefore needed to be dealt with.
- ◆ Since participants' backgrounds were rather difficult, their social developments would have to be monitored closely.
- ◆ Learning to learn, team work and learner orientation were crucial points of the pedagogical strategies to be applied.

The ex-post evaluation was done with the help of two instruments: a trainers' questionnaire and a learners' questionnaire assessing the achievements and shortcomings of the workshops.

Among other things, the questionnaires for the participants focused on: general satisfaction, things learnt, the way of carrying out the workshops, virtual communication, etc.

Among other things, the questionnaires for the trainers focused on: general satisfaction, strong and weak points, lessons learnt, pedagogical approach, and methodology applied, virtual communication, recommendations.



General satisfaction of the participants

Generally speaking the feedback from participants about their satisfaction is very positive.

They are happy with what they have learned and enjoyed themselves while doing it. Their rather high expectations identified ex ante were met.

Moreover, they state that they would do it again and would like to know more about the subjects concerned. From these statements it can be concluded that they had an educational experience which motivated them to get engaged in lifelong learning (again).

It is noteworthy that participants felt they had learned similarly much in all three subject areas.

This means that this combination of subjects in one workshop is a successful strategy.

In the open questions participants mentioned taking photos and working with Photoshop as the most important thing they learnt in the workshop and the part they liked best. This preference for photography / photo processing as compared to learning English is in line with the statements given in the ex-ante evaluation. Photography and photo processing skills worked as motivators to get involved in the workshop, and apparently continued to motivate many youngsters throughout the workshop.

The most important lessons learnt from the workshops

The trainers in the four pilot countries drew quite different conclusions:

- The Italian trainers intend to integrate more practical work and field trips to increase the workshop's attractiveness.
- Germany might form differentiated groups (beginners-advanced) in order to deal better with existing knowledge levels.
- Bulgaria wants to put more emphasis on discipline and at the same time make the workshop more interesting by provoking learners to take on different perspectives.
- Romania might reorganize some of the content in order to gain more time for trips outside the classroom.



Conclusions and recommendations

The most important message coming from the learners and trainers of the first piloting round of the DYACIT "creative labs" is:

The innovative concept of combining photography, digital photo-processing and English in a workshop in order to use the fascination for multimedia to motivate youngsters at risk for learning has worked. The overall feedback is clearly (very) positive.

Having stressed these several areas, for improving the "creative labs", other focus points can be identified in the second piloting round:

- *Reduction of the drop-out rate*
- *Introduction of an individual counseling element*
- *Review of training content*
- *Improvement of virtual communication between the groups.*

The next meeting and international conference will be held in Bucharest, Romania in September 2008.

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