



Co-creating Social Services

A compilation of 26 service user driven
micro projects in the Baltic Sea Region



Imprint

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Introduction: Service development and co-creation in the SEMPRES project

The starting point of the SEMPRES project was the shared observation of the sixteen project partners from all over the Baltic Sea Region that

- it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide high-quality social services in rural areas, where inhabitants live far from urban centres, transport infrastructure is insufficient and populations are ageing,
- users of social services, particularly those belonging to vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, often feel forgotten and stigmatised and don't consider it possible to make a positive change in their life situation by themselves, and that
- innovative processes like co-creation do not seem to have reached all rural areas and organisations, many of which work with a rather traditional approach to service provision.

The partners of the SEMPRES project wanted to test involving service users in the design and implementation of new social services that directly respond to the needs of the inhabitants of rural areas. They based their activities on the principle of empowerment, which means that instead of just delivering a social service to their target group, service providers support the service

users in developing their confidence and innate potential and capacity to take control of their lives and circumstances. The idea was that this approach would lead to co-creation processes in which service users and service providers jointly develop new or improve existing service offers for the benefit of people living in rural areas.

The SEMPRES project had both a local and a transnational component which alternated in importance during the project lifetime:

At the **local level**, the partners chose one specific locality *to work in* (e.g. a municipality, county or region) and one user group *to work with* (e.g. people suffering from addictions, migrants or older adults). Each partner identified and brought together public authorities, NGOs and private service providers in a Local Empowerment Network (LEN) which became the basis for all further activities at the local level.

At the **transnational level**, the partners collected empowerment tools for the three phases of service development: (1) needs assessment, (2) service design and (3) entrepreneurial support for co-creation initiatives. The tools that were considered most suitable by the partnership were compiled into short-lists.



Micro projects are defined in SEMPRES as small-scale initiatives at the local level that aim to improve the living situations of members of disadvantaged target groups. To be considered as a micro project in SEMPRES, initiatives must fulfil the following criteria:

- They must be initiated at least partly by service users (members of a disadvantaged group).
- They must react to specific needs of this disadvantaged group.
- They must deliver a service that was not previously available or follow a newly developed approach.

The service users thus become co-producers of social services, while the traditional social service providers act as facilitators rather than drivers of this process.

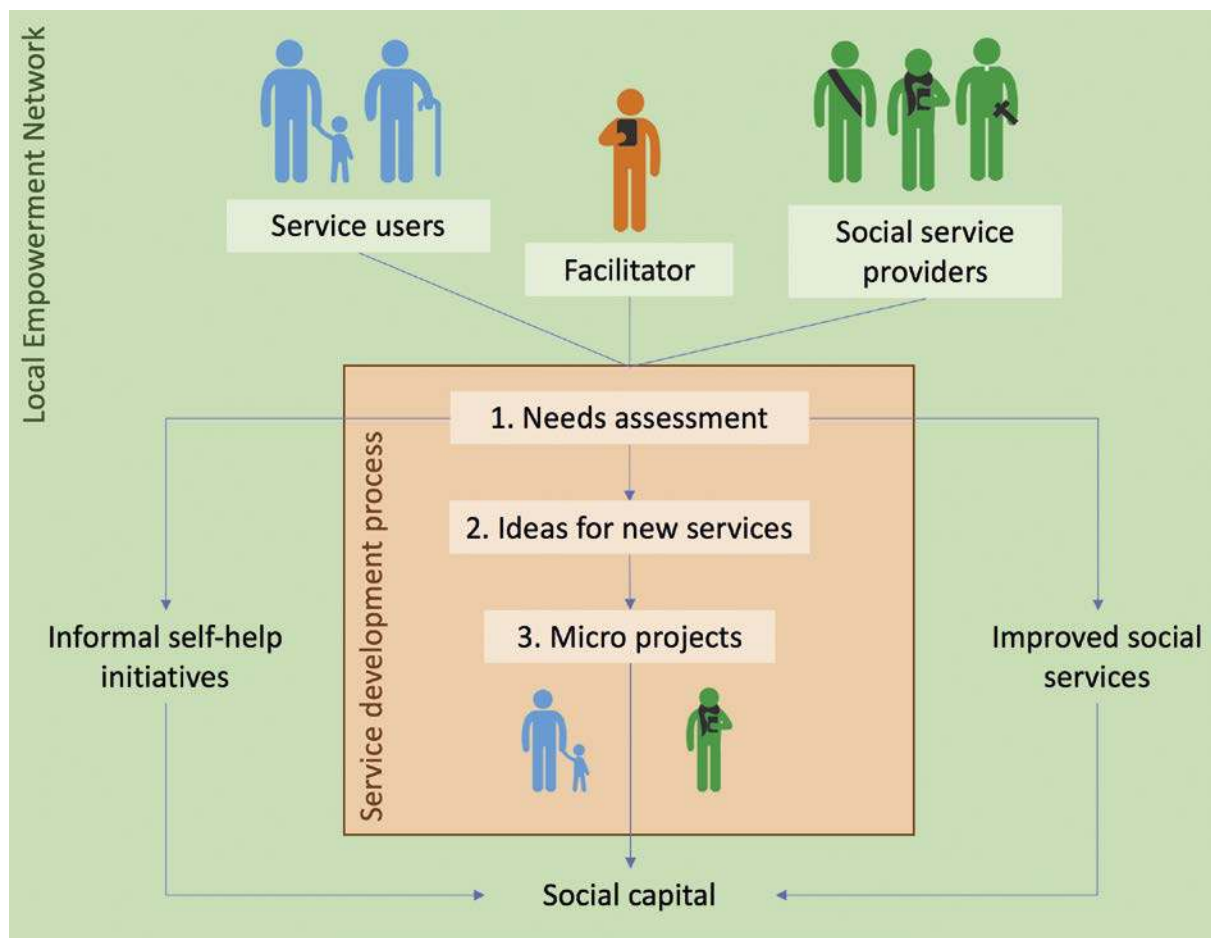
Once more at the **local level**, the partners tested these tools. They started with organising workshops and meetings with vulnerable groups and service providers and used participatory approaches such as the future workshop to get better knowledge about the needs of the service users. The next step was to engage the participants in the collection of ideas for new services that respond to these needs. The most promising ideas were developed further into so-called micro projects (see box on page 4), using service design methods such as the Business Model Canvas or Theory of Change. Once the micro projects had been established, the local SEMPRES partners and their LEN partners supported them with consultations, training, strategies for communication and fund-raising and much more – in short: everything but direct project financing. The aim was to enable as many of the micro projects as possible to continue operating once the SEMPRES project had ended, e.g. by helping the micro pro-

ject actors to create organisational structures or finding an institution willing to include the service of the micro project in its own portfolio.

And again at the **transnational level**, the SEMPRES partners jointly evaluated the activities carried out in the different Local Empowerment Networks, collected and compiled experiences with the different empowerment tools and prepared four key publications:

- an Empowerment Handbook that provides practical advice to social workers,
- a Guidebook for Empowerment Training and an Organisational Roadmap that are meant to help social service providers raise the empowerment competence of their staff and reflect on the degree to which user involvement is practised in their own organisations,
- and finally Policy Recommendations that aim at improving the framework conditions for sustainable social service provision in rural areas.

Fig. 1 - How micro projects developed in the SEMPRES project



We have now reached the end of this exciting journey and are happy and proud that the SEMPRES approach has led to the development of more than 30 micro projects, 26 of which are presented in this brochure. As you will see when reading the descriptions of the micro projects, they are very different in many ways, including

- the local socio-economic settings under which they were initiated,
- the needs and desires of the different vulnerable groups that were involved in the co-creation process,
- the type and scope of the service delivered,
- the degree to which service users assumed ownership of the micro project and
- the organisational status of the micro project (while some micro projects successfully founded cooperatives or social enterprises, others chose to remain on a rather informal self-support level with low thresholds for participation).

But you will also notice that the micro projects have a lot in common: Many micro projects reported that there was a strong motivation and team spirit of the service users once they had

gotten used to working with each other and established their own ways of communicating and cooperating. In most cases it was a necessity as well as a success factor to build the leadership, management and communication skills of the micro project participants in order to enable them to take responsibility for such a challenging task as developing a new service. Meanwhile, much depended on the willingness of the social service providers to step out of their daily routines, to try out new approaches, to listen to and work as partners with the service users. It took courage from the social workers to give up control of the process at the right times and trust the micro project participants to find their own way. The SEMPRES partners are grateful for the commitment and time that many organisations involved in the Local Empowerment Networks invested into the project without receiving any project funding.



We hope that this little introduction has helped you understand what the SEMPRES project and the micro projects are about, and that it made you curious to read more about them. We would be thrilled if you even found some inspiration for starting your own micro projects.

Whenever you stumble across terms and methods in this booklet that you are not familiar with, such as perhaps “action learning” or “the double diamond”, we encourage and invite you to take a look at our other project outputs, namely the Empowerment Handbook and the Organisational Roadmap. The tools and working methods we used in SEMPRES are explained there in greater detail.

On behalf of the SEMPRES partnership we thank you for taking the time to read this brochure and wish you the best of success on your own road to empowerment!

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The Afghan Association in Kokkola

Kokkolan afganistanilaiset ry.

A community-initiated and self-run association of migrants and refugees that promotes social collaboration and activities



SEMPRE partner: University of Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius

Location of the micro project: Kokkola, Finland

Service user group: Migrants

Local network partners: Silta community house (NGO)

WHERE WE STARTED

In a needs assessment workshop we found out that the members of the Afghan community who have migrated as refugees experience loneliness and isolation. Also, they wished for more services in their native language, and a place where they could meet regularly. A plan for possible action was made, which was not easy since we had to gain the trust of the community first. Contacts were made on individual bases with different families (by visiting their homes, attending celebrations, etc.). Finally, a group of active community members was formed and initiated a plan for starting an NGO of their own. An application was filed for a start-up grant from the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) and was met with success. After this financing was secured a space was rented, which now hosts several clubs for studying English in Farsi/Dari, child care in the evening (so that parents can go shopping, or have private time), and an art club. The space also functions

as a hub for informal get-togethers. Furthermore, the association organised a trip together in autumn to spend a day at a nature retreat. The service created is innovative because it is a truly community-initiated micro project that has been created by service-users for service users and is being run only by the migrants themselves.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

At first it was very difficult to involve end-users. The starting phase was the most difficult, since the issue of gaining trust by the community members is a tough nut to crack. The LEN partners were not actively involved in this micro project. In fact, one of the barriers was that many LEN partners did not believe that the migrant community could have the skills to work as an NGO. Only the local community house SILTA provided the association meeting spaces, and the SEMPRE project was the only one outside the community which invested time to support the NGO's development.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Since the start, working with the NGO seemed to be extremely beneficial for the migrants. They acquired new skills and learned about democratic principles within an organised structure. The NGO even got a representative to the City's Multicultural Council, which can be counted as a great success for the representation of the community of Afghans in the region. However, it is hard to motivate people to be proactive, and initially the LEN coordinator had to initiate almost all the actions before they were picked up by the group themselves. We are confident that the NGO can keep on functioning even after the SEMPRES support is over as the skills and social capital created are ideal preconditions for a vibrant, empowered community.



»The entire process of establishing and running an association has been a great opportunity to learn how it is possible to act as a member of Finnish civil society. A member from the Afghan Association became a representative to the Multicultural Council in the City of Kokkola, so it is possible to influence decision making and be an agent in the democratic processes.«

Kati Turtiainen, SEMPRES coordinator in Kokkola



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Action Research, interviews

... the service design phase:

Action Research

... the support phase:

Training and advice in meetings, working with social media and applying for funds



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

This is a project stemming from the community and serving the community.

There is a great learning process for democracy.

Collaboration and working together strengthens the community and sense of belonging.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://maahanmuuttajatmaaseudulla.wordpress.com/>



AlDi – Single Parents in Dithmarschen

AlDi - Alleinerziehende in Dithmarschen

*A group of single parents created a website
to network and communicate with each other*



SEMPRE partner: Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein

Location of the micro project: Meldorf, Dithmarschen, Germany

Service user group: Single parents

Local network partners: Diaconie of Dithmarschen

WHERE WE STARTED

The SEMPRE staff of the Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein first had to find its way into the local communities in the County of Dithmarschen – single parents were not very well connected with each other and with social service providers. A kick-off event and a lot of networking helped to make the SEMPRE project more known in the region, and eventually a group of single parents was established.

In multiple meetings with the social service providers and the single parents, both sides were able to tell about their view on the single parent s' life situations and service needs.

This view was important for the development of the micro project. All of the participants of these meetings had ideas about how to solve the problems in the life situation of single parents.

Together we collected these ideas through using the need assessment tools.

Our starting point was the emphasis on a lack of networking and communication for and between single parents in the area of Dithmarschen. There was no public place or platform in which single parents could find important information specifically targeted at them. Therefore, the persons concerned only heard about events or activities of interest for them by chance through “mouth to mouth” information flow instead of structured communication channels.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Step by step a group of single parents came together in meetings to talk about solutions. They agreed that an open platform for single parents could fix the above-mentioned problem.

The group decided that a website would be the easiest way to meet their interests. Together with the LEN coordinator, they structured topics and functions a website has to offer. The website has the purpose to share information (e.g. on first aid consultation, news, events, etc.) with each other and stay connected by exchanging about topics relevant to their life situation as single parents.

In website-developing classes, the single parents learned how to develop and maintain the website on their own, and they distributed the necessary tasks among themselves. There was also a writing workshop in which the group learned how to design appealing texts for the reader. This workshop was taught voluntarily by a journalist who is a single mother herself. As an additional step the group visited a workshop for fundraising, to learn how to collect money for the own website.



WHAT WE LEARNED

By creating the contents and the layout themselves the ALLDi group ensures that the content is relevant and appealing to other single parents in the region, and that the exchange of information is not limited to the active group itself.

Through this whole process the social service providers provided rooms and technical equipment, but the goal was to enable the ALLDi

group to acquire the skills - and eventually also the funds - to maintain and further develop on their own. Bundling information and providing "first aid" to single parents turned out to be an important step towards self-help and to building a sound and stable network of single parents in the rural area of Dithmarschen.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Round table, idea cards, interviews, idea selection

... the service design phase:

Business Model Canvas

... the support phase:

Business Model Canvas



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

- The engagement and the willingness of the single parents to create a new platform
- Even when they were disagreeing the group kept working together on the project.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.alldi.info/de/>



Coffee Shop “Stopover in Liepa”

Kafejnīca “Pieturi Liepā”

Promoting social entrepreneurship by establishing a café and meeting space



SEMPRE partner: Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Location of the micro project: Liepa, Priekuli, Latvia

Service user group: Women, single parents

Local network partners: NGO “Save the Children”, Priekuli Municipality, youth organisation “Orange”

WHERE WE STARTED

Liepa is a place well-known for its industry. Historically workers were brought from different Soviet countries here, also ex-offenders were part of a new local community. Higher unemployment and crime rates seem to be a relic from the past in this area. In the first needs assessment meetings with the local people – women, parents and unemployed youth – we learned that many of them feel socially isolated and would enjoy a nice, welcoming place for parents with children – like a coffee shop. Subsequent meetings revealed that some of the skills and experiences of the service users could be very useful to run such a coffee shop. The group came to the common vision to establish such a coffee shop, a meeting and work place with a warm-hearted environment for their children. So, we began the journey to create such place. It was a new form of entrepreneurship

in Latvia, and therefore examples were taken from other SEMPRE partner countries (Sweden, Germany, Finland).

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Primarily, our initiative is meant to offer an integrated work space for persons from disadvantaged groups as defined by the Social Entrepreneurship Law in force since April 2018. Besides, there is the idea to create a web-page (informative resource) for social service providers, employers or others interested in social entrepreneurship with integrated working places. Here practical tools and learning materials about the environment for employment of people with functional or intellectual disabilities are provided. This idea is being merged with two developing micro project ideas in Alsviki and Koceni, where persons with functional disabilities, special

education institutions and disability community representatives work together.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Trust-building between SEMPRES representatives and the local community was very important. It was key to hold contact with the recently established NGO "Save the Children" in Priekuli as well as local social service providers.

The service development tools were important in order to keep focus on the goal. For instance, it was very useful to use the Social Business Model Canvas to discover all the necessary tasks and resources, analyse individual capacities and common abilities, identify funding opportunities and develop a business plan. Every single person chose his or her own role in this process and defined what they could contribute to the coffee shop in the future. Attracting funding, representing the group's idea to stakeholders and encouraging the group not to give up were major support activities. The idea was presented to the local social service department and their officer joined the enterprise's advisory board. Crucial as it was to keep the representatives of the service users' interests at the core of the process, it is still rather hard to convince authorities to believe in the work with disadvantaged groups in such a different way from what they are used to. Nevertheless, we keep on trying and are motivated by every small success.



»I like to be together with other women and parents, it is meaningful to come together with others with similar needs. I hope to work in a place where I can balance it with my family and kids.«

A single mother from Liepa



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Participatory rapid appraisal, focus group interviews

... the service design phase:

Business Model Canvas, study circle

... the support phase:

Social work tools (individual and group work), practical training



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

Social entrepreneurship is a new idea and very innovative in its development process. Applying it means testing the system as whole, social policies, authorities and individual capacities

Though the development process is not yet completed, it encouraged and empowered people to work on their ideas, dreams and fulfilment



FIND MORE INFORMATION

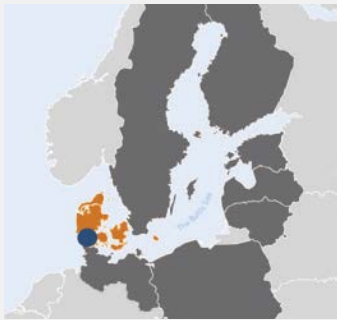
<https://projectsempreivia.wordpress.com>



The Cross-Cultural Group

Kultur på tværs

An open event with migrants, social service providers, politicians and citizens led to three micro projects that promote cross-cultural communication and understanding



SEMPRE partner: University College South Denmark

Location of the micro project: Varde, Denmark

Service user group: Refugees and migrants

Local network partners: Municipality of Varde

WHERE WE STARTED

We started with a vision to improve the integration effort in the municipality: Rethink Integration Varde. To this end a co-creation process was started that included local politicians, social service providers, voluntary organisations, clubs and local citizens with interest in integrations topics. The co-creation group planned an event (“Helle Hallen”) to listen to possible activities and ideas from a wider range of the local inhabitants. The event was an open arrangement which among other things included different workshops where the participants could share and develop new ideas in order to improve integration efforts.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The “Helle Hallen” event was a great success and let to the development of three micro projects:
(1) “Cross-cultural group” : This group is working

on bringing people with different cultural backgrounds together by organizing events and activities. It is an open group which consist of about 10 young people with different ethnic backgrounds. They meet regular with a social service provider in a very cozy and informal atmosphere which also gives space for discussions of more private issues. In that way the group is also a kind of support group for the participants, giving them the chance to share common problems and needs. The group’s organised two farm holiday camps for single parents in a disadvantaged position. The holidays were financed through fund raising and the families participated for free. The young people worked as volunteers. They carried out picnics, activities for the children and saw to that everything went well. It was a crucial point that the families represented both ethnic Danish families and

families with other ethnic backgrounds.

There was also a Christmas event open to all inhabitants of the Municipality of Varde. The young people from the group and their relatives had prepared food – all specialties from their native countries - and arranged with a Danish/Syrian orchestra to play music from both countries. It was a great success and so many inhabitants signed up that the group had to close for further entries.

(2) Establishing a local football team: This grew out of an idea from the starting event (“Helle hallen”). Some of the young boys from the different ethnic minority groups did not feel comfortable in the local football team. With help from a social service provider they made their own team (“Varde United”) and got it registered as a formal team with a committee. The boys themselves sought sponsors, equipment etc.

(3) A folk high school with the aim of bringing people together and get refugees and migrants familiar with Danish culture and politics. The aim for this microproject was to bring people with different ethnic backgrounds together with Danish people and increase the general knowledge regarding Danish culture and Danish governmental traditions. A visit to Copenhagen was organised in order to get more knowledge about the Danish capital, visiting different places with historical and cultural importance. The arrangements are mostly planned as one day excursions and financed by different funds.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The micro projects' activities were financed by fund seeking and were planned and carried out in co-operation with volunteers and social service

providers. The role of the social service provider was mainly the role of a facilitator and as a kind of literary midwife. That means that the role of the social service provider shifted when they entered the field of Rethink Integration Varde. They did not act as professionals but as volunteers on equal terms with the rest of the group. The ability to this shift of role seems to have been very crucial in the co-creation process in the Municipality of Varde and can be seen as an important factor that lead to an empowerment approach.

»It means a lot that as a volunteer you can feel the warm atmosphere, the happiness when arranging and joining the different events. On the holiday camp we were 10 volunteers, 35 children and 25 single parents. It was a great feeling and some of the families became friends and are seeing each other afterwards. I am in it because it is filled with human energy.«

A volunteer in the co-creation process



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED

... the needs assessment phase:

Co-creation

... the service design phase:

Co-creation and a sort of action learning

... the support phase:

Following and monitoring the co-creation process



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The co-creation process worked with a remarkably open structure where all participants took part on equal terms.

A result of the process was political backing in the changes of the integration effort in the municipality.

The social service providers showed the ability to change roles and act differently according to the roles.



Guests at school

Gäst i skolan

Older adults visited a secondary school and shared their expert knowledge with students – a win-win situation from which both groups benefited



SEMPRE partner: Novia University of Applied Sciences

Location of the micro project: Korsholm (Mustasaari), Finland

Service user group: Older adults

Local network partners: Korsholms högstadium (Secondary School)

WHERE WE STARTED

During a workshop with older adults in the Ostrobothnian municipality Korsholm, older adults expressed an interest in developing closer ties to youngsters, particularly to teenagers, considering that there were already different activities connecting older adults with young children.

In a dialogue with the school Korsholms högstadium, a micro project called „Guest at school“ was launched, aiming to bring older adults and teens together in class, at school, engaging older adults as guests and experts at themes they had a particular knowledge about. Herein, the goal of building intergenerational meetings was intertwined with older adults sharing their knowledge and competences that many older adults have assembled throughout their life, both professionally and in private.

Many older adults have an intrinsic knowledge of many arenas of working life, third sector services and volunteer work, as well as household competences that younger persons yet have

not learnt or participated in. Some older adults find it regretful that their knowledge is not so much valued after retirement. At the same time, retirement sometimes comes with alienation from younger generations, which many older adults also find to be unfortunate. Teachers at secondary school usually do not have an extensive experience of working outside of school or in other areas of working life. Therefore, they, too, expressed an interest in including older adults in their educational activities.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

In order to realize the “guest at school“-concept, the SEMPRE-project and school representatives spent quite some time engaging a sufficient number of adults who were interested in intergenerational cooperation, and sharing their knowledge and experience, at school.

A data base was created with older adults interested in participation, including the subjects and themes of the older adult’s choice,

contact details and a photo of the older adult. All participants agreed to registering these data. After compiling the data, and taking photographs of participants, the data base was passed on to Korsholms högskole and maintained by the school. Moreover, an introductory afternoon was held dealing with themes in respect of practical matters at school, issues of responsibility for content of education, and disciplinary matters. During the spring of 2018, six older adults were engaged in educational activities at Korsholms högskole. The number of occasions to be a guest at school was not set in advance; some participated several times, some only once or twice during the spring semester. The school also arranged a thematic week on entrepreneurship, engaging four of the older adults.



»This is a gold mine in teaching.«

A teacher who participated in the project

WHAT WE LEARNED

Older adults, teaching staff and pupils at school have given positive feedback on lectures and activities held by „Guests at school“. However, engaging older adults interested in participating in the early phases of the project appeared to be rather time consuming. Therefore, it is quite understandable that the school itself was not likely to initiate the project without support from a facilitating third party.

In addition, in order to keep continuity in engaging older adults at school, it is also important that the facilitating role is passed on from the SEMPRES project to another actor, whose role is to engage older adults also in the future, facilitating the inclusion of older adults also in other schools than the piloting school.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future workshop

... the service design phase:

Theory of Change

... the support phase:

Training and a manual for updating the calendar in Finnish and Swedish



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

When discussing the concept of older adults as guests at school with the principal of another school, the principal looked surprised and said: "What an excellent idea! Why haven't we thought of that ourselves?"

To our knowledge, integrating older adults at secondary school as an organised and structured activity is novel in Finland.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

Activity Calendar: <https://sites.google.com/site/seniorprogramkorsholm/>

Facebook page: "SEMPRE Ostrobothnia"



Harkujärve Community Church

Harkujärve Kogukonnakirik

Inhabitants of a small village turned an empty church building into a vibrant community centre



SEMPRE partner: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Foundation for Social Action

Location of the micro project: Harkujärve, Estonia

Service user group: Various groups

Local network partners: Harkujärve Congregation, NGO Inglitiib (“Angel’s Wing” for child care), volunteers

WHERE WE STARTED

Estonia is considered one of the least religious countries in Europe. One of the many empty church buildings in Estonia was located in Harkujärve, a small village in the County of Harjumaa. The SEMPRE group of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church decided to ask the locals for their ideas on how the church – 6000 cubic meters of cold building - could be used. Various tools and methods were combined to identify needs in the community and find the best ideas. The very first decision was to renovate the church with the help of volunteers, and during renovation work discussions on possible uses for the building were continued. The municipality

and the local school were also invited to the round-table discussions and at last, the proposal that had the most support was to provide day care for children and a place where children could spend their time after school instead of roaming in the streets. With the help of some experience volunteers, we wrote applications for the SEMPRE partner Foundation for Social Action to get support for renovating the loft and to set off childcare in the rooms of the pastorate.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

But that was not all – during the trust building phase also the childrens’ parents were offered to become engaged in activities, and today there are

7 different hobby and creative groups, including a dance studio, a gymnastics group and a gardening group that planted trees and plants in the Church garden. The once empty building has turned into a full-fledged community centre that operates on at least five days a week. On Sundays there are regular sermons, and at the same time the church is often used for concerts and culture events. The premises of the church are also used by various NGOs and provide a meeting point for municipality officers, organisations and citizens who also use this as an opportunity to meet over the fences. The bonding of the community is noticeable and this has laid a solid foundation for trust among local inhabitants and social service providers. The local municipality has signed a public use contract and supports the activities in the community church with funding. In addition, a fundraising strategy and PR campaign were created, presentations on public media and christian channels were made.



community church was developed took time and a lot of communication and meetings with people living nearby surroundings and other NGOs in the neighbourhood. Permanently we have to fight for financial resources. Also manpower is limited – active people are active in many fields, so time is also a very scare resource. Clear division of tasks and attraction of events organised in the Church help to diminish these problems. The community church has taken over many of the

WHAT WE LEARNED

The community church is a novel concept in Estonia, and conviviality as the philosophy behind it also needs further consciousness raising. Building up trust among the neighbourhood after several disappointing years before the

responsibilities that have been taken over by the municipality elsewhere, such as day care and disability services. On the other hand, the municipality has proposed taking responsibility for children with disabilities. This has also helped finance the community church.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future Workshop, Participatory Rapid Appraisal, focus groups, semi-structured interviews

... the service design phase:

Theory of Change and Social Business Model Canvas

... the support phase:

Education, training, self-reflection, mentoring, coaching, media outreach



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The church was built up from scratches, it used to be an empty building in every sense, and it was unknown in the neighbourhood.

Locals step into the church or sit on the benches outdoors as if they came to visit somebody's home, and after sermons on Sundays they gather for tea in the church's basement



Improvement of entrepreneurial skills of single parents

Vienišų tėvų verslumo gebėjimų tobulinimas

What started with a family afternoon is going to lead to the creation of a family welfare center including several work places



SEMPRE partner: Lutheran Diaconia, Lithuania

Location of the micro project: Jurbarkas, Lithuania

Service user group: Single parents

Local network partners: Jurbarkas District Municipality, Local Activity Group Nemunas

WHERE WE STARTED

In the beginning we faced difficulties in attracting our target group - single parents - to take part in our SEMPRE activities. Those persons who were interested and came to the first meeting, however, were active and inclined to change the prevailing social environment. The survey of needs we conducted, using the methods of action research and future workshops, showed that the majority of single mothers feel that they are perceived as "different": inferior due to the fact they raise children as single parents, because they lack money and are considered as "hunters for men". They indicated the following points which they thought needed to change for

their life quality to improve: Work and salary, own household, repose, communication with people who feel the same, exchange of information and knowledge and help for each other.

When they heard about the ideas for activities in the SEMPRE project, which aimed at contributing to the change of social environment, improvement of entrepreneurial skills and development of social environment for communication, a strong involvement of the participants and desire to be part of the change was noticeable.

The needs assessment revealed that almost all representatives of the target group shared the same key interests: the possibility to start and maintain communication, and upskilling.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The concept of the micro project (which was developed using the Logical Framework Approach), followed the above mentioned needs. As a result we identified two key objectives:

1. to create a platform – a community of families – by organising a family afternoon in Jurbarkas,
2. to organise professional consultations for the improvement of entrepreneurial competencies among the single parents.

While we were organising the family afternoon, it became apparent that the participating single parents lacked management skills. Therefore, a training plan for upskilling was drawn up that contained three themes of entrepreneurial competence training:

- “Personal efficiency at work”,
- “Active sales and basics of social network marketing” and
- “Business plan: practical training”.

At the end of the micro project, we now have two tangible results: the Family Afternoon “Give,

Exchange, Donate” was carried out with a great number of participants, and a business plan for the establishment of a multifunctional social service centre was prepared. An application for support for has been submitted that would help to establish a “Family Welfare Center”, including a day care center for children and various services for families (training, consultancy, artistic activities). If this application is successful, then it will have been the single parents themselves who created new workplaces in social services!

WHAT WE LEARNED

It took a year to generate the idea of the micro project and to implement its activities. This is quite a long period during which the participants’ motivation and intensity of participation fluctuated. We are glad that during that period we had activities which encouraged the involvement of single parents and empowered them to contribute to the change of social environment and improvement of their skills.

»The micro project in Jurbarkas served as an opportunity for single parents to change their life. Approaching their problems systematically allowed them to prepare a business plan which may turn into three workplaces for single parents. «

Evelina Tamošaitytė, Project Leader in LEN of Jurbarkas



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Action research and future workshop

... the service design phase:

Logical Framework Approach

... the support phase:

Mentoring, trainings



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

- The project group, irrespective of their social situation, carried out equal cooperation in order to achieve the goals of the micro project
- The expected continuity of the micro project is ensured by the establishment of a multifunctional social service centre for families



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.ldiakonija.puslapiai.lt/?id=23>



An Innovative Social Support Service

Inovatyvi socialinio palaikymo paslauga

Those who have completed a rehabilitation programme get trained to support people suffering from addictions in starting a new life



SEMPRE partner: Lutheran Diaconia, Lithuania

Location of the micro project: Vyžiai, Lithuania

Service user group: Persons suffering from addiction

Local network partners: Pagėgiai municipality, Rehabilitation centre VšĮ Gabrielius and others

WHERE WE STARTED

At the beginning of the micro project, the consequences of alcohol consumption or drug use were identified together with the participants of the micro project who were inhabitants of a rehabilitation centre. Homelessness, divorce, loss of family, crimes, job loss, debts, loss of social skills, failure to complete education, lack of social skills – these are all factors that evoke fear of future responsibilities, failure and lack of income among people suffering from addictions and often lead to a lack of readiness to leave the rehabilitation centre and start a new life. The members of our group were asked to indicate actions which would help them to achieve individual goals such as finding a job, getting a profession, going abroad to work, paying debts, finding a place to live or restoring relationships with family. We determined that in order to

achieve the said goals, it is necessary to continue with the programme “do not break” after leaving the rehabilitation centre. In this psychologically demanding environment, the urgent need of the user group led to the idea of a social support service for those who have completed the rehabilitation programme and attempt to return to the society again.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

While dealing with one of the most relevant problems – the lack of social support service - it was decided in the micro project group that consultations regarding activity optimisation, development of new services and the improvement of employees' personal and professional skills were most needed. The purpose of the micro project was therefore the improvement of professional and entrepreneurial skills by preparing a 'sup-

port team' for the provision of a new service – social support. The members of the team were employees of the rehabilitation center, some of whom had been in the rehabilitation programme themselves and had turned from service users to service providers. The consultations package for development and provision of the social support service consisted of self-reflection, education on latest theoretical and practical knowledge about social support in today's social environment and coaching, i.e. practical professional strategic trainings for current staff and representatives to prepare them for development of new service – social support for the clients of the rehabilitation centre. Within the framework of the micro project, re-skilling was carried out. The participants applied the knowledge acquired in the training in practice and strategically arranged the implementation of the new service of social support. The innovative aspect of this micro project was

that the target group members participated in the development of the new service. Moreover, the organisation providing long-term rehabilitation services has introduced an additional service – social support – thus becoming a unique organisation providing a versatile support service.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The support tools have strengthened the organisation's staff and service users who contribute to the provision of the new service of social support as a community. It was an unexpected rediscovery of the nucleus of organisation's staff who became more united and acted as a team.

Unfortunately, not everything went as we hoped: An enterprising and competent representative of the target group, who significantly contributed to the development and implementation of the micro project, regrettably succumbed to addictions again and left the group.

»Participation in the micro project allowed me to get to know my employees better. After the supervision sessions and training, I am able to clearly assign responsibilities and motivate my employees. It is a big plus for me as a director. «

Valdas Miliuskas, Director of VšĮ Gabrielius



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Action research and future workshop

... the service design phase:

Logical Framework Approach, Business Model Canvas

... the support phase:

Self-reflection, education, coaching



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

Active involvement of the persons who have completed the rehabilitation programme in, impressive management skills of persons suffering from addiction

The service developed and the process itself became a good practice which attracted the attention of other organisations engaged in provision of social services.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.lidiakonija.puslapiai.lt/?id=23>



Kohila Supported Work Center KATIKODU NGO

MTÜ Kohila Turvakeskus KATIKODU

A common hands-on project with a win-win effect for young people with special needs



SEMPRE partner: Foundation for Social Action

Location of the micro project: Harjumaa and Kohila, Estonia

Service user group: People with special needs / mental disabilities

Local network partners: School principal and teachers, leisure and sports organisations

WHERE WE STARTED

Adults with intellectual disabilities are in a somewhat lost situation in Estonia. According to the law, parents are responsible for their children's welfare until they are under 18. After that, it depends on the family, and so support from the local community is essential. In terms of finding work or just meaningful activities this target group has a quite limited perspective.

Supported work centres are a solution for some but not all the problems, but they significantly ease the situation of these people and their

families. Kohila centre was established as a micro project within the SEMPRE project, but it follows a significant "micro-micro" project.

In the Kohila Supported Work Centre KATIKODU adults with mental special needs have the possibility to work, making handicraft on every working day. Since most of them are young men, it was needed to offer them a more challenging development. There was also the need to build entrance way for the day centre in Harkujärve (see the description of the micro project Harkujärve

Community Church, page 18). We put together the needs and brought together the people to solve the problem.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

This micro project is just one example of how to develop mental and physical skills of people with special needs. Highly symbolic is also the object of this certain micro-project: differently abled people were building a necessary staircase for children with severe disabilities.

During the process theoretical and practical knowledge about building concrete structures were given to the young adults with mental disabilities. Together with support persons, the men cleaned and prepared the place, sat up the wood and metal frames and helped to spread the concrete. They learned to use the working tools and studied materials. The outcome was

»The men with mental special needs were able to come out from their everyday life and got a new meaningful experience.«

Kadri Keskküla, Estonian Evangelical Church

an entrance staircase that physically disabled children could use. It was a new experience for the young men and a meaningful learning for them. The staircase is used by the handicapped people going to the daycentre in the community church. After the concreting seminary the men had power to build up the fireplace for St. John Eve and altogether had the joy to celebrate the successful work around the dinner table in the congregation.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The seminary was a new experience and a meaningful learning for the young men and at the same time the entranceway has been built which will be used by the handicapped people going to the daycentre in the community church.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Action research, focus group interviews, problem and solution tree

... the service design phase:

Theory of Change, Logical Framework Approach

... the support phase:

Learning and practice, training, mentoring and networking



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

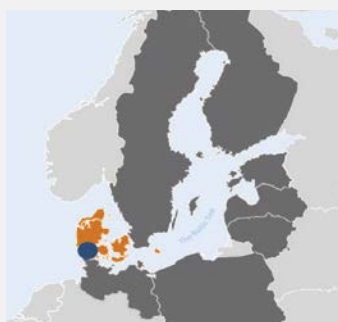
Amazingly, the micro project solved two problems at the same time. It has brought together very different people: builders, people with special needs, social workers, trainers. The diverse community gave an experience of conviviality.



Learn to read with Hiba

Lær at læse med Hiba

A self-support initiative by a young refugee to help even younger refugees with reading and understanding the local language



SEMPRE partner: University College South Denmark

Location of the micro project: Tønder, Denmark

Service user group: Refugees and migrants

Local network partners: Tønder Library, children's librarian

This initiative resulted from another micro project, the parents' night at Toender Primary School, where parents with refugee background, teachers and other stakeholders met. During this even it became clear that one of the greatest challenges these parents face is helping their children to learn to read and write. One of the ideas the parents came up with was a reading club.

Hiba, a young 16-year old girl with refugee background decided to start the reading club. She and a friend meet once a week at the local library for a couple of hours with six to eight children.

The project is driven by the passion of a girl with refugee background to help children learn to read. To support her, the children's librarian and the library's culture mediator offered a room at the library and helped to prepare an invitation.

What is remarkable is that the project is carried by a 16-year old girl with refugee background who takes responsibility for doing what she can to help other children with refugee background to learn to read.



Childcare during doctor visits

Single parents find it difficult to visit the doctor. It is much easier if someone is taking care of the children



SEMPRE partner: Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein

Location of the micro project: Büsum, Dithmarschen, Germany

Service user group: Single parents

Local network partners: Diaconie of Dithmarschen, County of Dithmarschen, Medical Centre Büsum

WHERE WE STARTED

The initial situation was the lack of time single parents have for their own health because they spend most of their time taking care of their children. In interviews it turned out that the health condition level is quite low because of the daily high stress levels single parents are facing which affects their lifestyles. Additionally, they avoid doctor visits together with their children due to the effort it takes and the stress it creates. After finding out about mental health problems of single parents, the responsible group of the LEN arranged meetings with health care providers as well with the Medical Center in Büsum. Very quickly, the idea emerged to offer childcare while single parents have consultations with doctors.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED AND WHAT WE LEARNED

We arranged social staff to be available for child care during the opening hours of the Medical Center in Büsum. During these hours, single parents could make an appointment with the doctors and leave their children in a separated room for child care. This arrangement allows the

parents to take some time for themselves and meet the doctor in a more relaxed atmosphere. After writing a concept and spreading flyers, the first appointments got offered. The service was offered first twice, later once a month.

Unfortunately, no single parent has used this service so far. Probably one reason was the location the team has chosen. Büsum has a better support infrastructure than other places in Dithmarschen and single parents are maybe not that reliant on support. Nevertheless, this start of a micro project did inspire other doctors in Dithmarschen to think about offering such a service. The LEN got many messages from people expressing their interest and it seems that with or without SEMPRE a similar service will develop in the area of Dithmarschen after this micro project trial.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:
Round-table, interviews



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://sempredithmarschen.wordpress.com/>



Locally Produced Joy of Life

Närproducerat Livsglädje

Compiling information about offers and events in a calendar helped older adults get active and involved in the local community



SEMPRE partner: Novia University of Applied Sciences

Location of the micro project: Korsholm (Mustasaari), Finland

Service user group: Older adults

Local network partners: Three local congregations, a local pensioner's organisation and others

WHERE WE STARTED

Among the interests that older adults expressed in a future workshop in the Ostrobothnian municipality Korsholm (Mustasaari) was the need for a better coordinated, exploratory information system regarding activities and also cooperation between actors and service providers for older people. These activities could simultaneously enhance participation of the population group within the region. These new findings led to the development of a micro project focusing on collecting, coordinating and spreading information about activities and events for older adults within the municipality of Korsholm/Mustasaari.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

First, some information events in six different parts of the region were organised in collaboration with different service providers from the municipality. Then a digital calendar was developed in cooperation with the Senior Centre of the municipality, in order to enable all different organisations to include relevant information directed at older adults in one portal. The calendar serves as a platform and a tool for all different actors and social service providers in the municipality to manage and coordinate their activities. For older adults, the calendar serves as a digital tool for finding activities from different providers and actors collected in one place. Now

the calendar is upheld and maintained on the server of the municipality. The responsibility for further development has been transferred from SEMPRE partners to the Senior Centre of Korsholm.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The micro project “Locally Produced Joy of Life” succeeded in establishing a new service that answers to the interests and needs expressed by older adults in the municipality.

During the process, however, two thresholds were identified. First, it was not always easy to engage older adults in focus of a planned event, get-together or an activity. The number of participants and engaged older adults varied greatly between the get-togethers throughout the micro project, making some activities not easy to plan for.

Second, in the process of spreading information about events, activities and get-togethers, it was clear that the tool which is the easiest to use from a service provider perspective, i.e. social media and digital communication, seemed to be the least effective in terms of motivating participation. Instead, during the micro projects of SEMPRE, participants were likely to refer to (printed) newspapers, radio programmes,



handouts and personal contacts when asked about where they had come across information. In addition, part of the older adults would rather have preferred a printed calendar instead of a digital one since they did not use computers, tablets or smart phones regularly.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future workshop

... the service design phase:

Theory of Change

... the support phase:

Training of social service providers, a manual for updating information of the virtual calendar in Finnish and in Swedish



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The most remarkable feature of the micro project was that both older adults and service providers found out that there is a wealth of activities including older adults in the municipality, and that the services are now easier to find and better coordinated than previously.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

Activity calendar: <https://sites.google.com/site/seniorprogramkorsholm/>

Facebook page “SEMPRE Ostrobothnia”



Meeting garden

Tikšanās dārzs

People with disabilities created a place to meet and spend time together - for themselves and for other citizens



SEMPRE partner: Diaconal Centre Liepaja

Location of the micro project: Grobiņa, Latvia

Service user group: People with disabilities

Local network partners: Latvian Red Cross Grobina, Social service of Grobina municipality, Grobinas evangelical lutheran congregation diaconia

WHERE WE STARTED

Grobiņa is a rural municipality that has only few inhabitants but covers a large area. People with disabilities who live here often have no access to day centres and other services that are only available in the city. Considering large distances and limited accessibility it is difficult for them to meet, especially in the long winters. This causes loneliness and marginalisation, which beside very low disposable incomes is one of the key challenges affecting the lives of people with disabilities in rural Latvia. The SEMPRE partner Diaconal Centre Liepaja contacted the social service of Grobiņa Municipality as well as some congregations and NGOs with regards to a possible cooperation in support of people with disabilities. Together they organised a conference attended by about 50 people with disabilities, representatives from NGOs and others. At this conference the participants decided to establish

a support group where people with disabilities can meet regularly. The municipality agreed to help with transport from home to the meeting place.

*»One good thing is done.
One small corner of the
city is made in order.
This meeting garden will
be there for people with
disabilities, for old people,
inhabitants and for visitors
from other places.«*

Andris Leimants, member of the "Meeting Garden" micro project

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The name of the support group in Grobiņa is “Be Together”. Its participants meet once a month in the premises of the local Red Cross. The main objective of the group became to remove isolation at home. Its members consequently decided to develop a meeting garden just behind the Red Cross house in Grobiņa. The idea is that people with disabilities can spend time and meet each other as well as other inhabitants. It is very important for the group to open itself for the community and involve citizens who otherwise don't have much contact to people with disabilities. Together the members of the support group learnt handicrafts, visited different places of interest, experienced friendship and conviviality. Under the hospice of the Red Cross the support group prepared an application for the local municipality. The municipality agreed to rent land in the yard of the Red Cross building for five years so that the group can develop its meeting garden. Since then the group has had several meetings for cleaning the territory and to plant bushes and trees. Next year it is planned to build a veranda and to complete the garden. The garden will be open for all people of Grobiņa, and it will be possible to organise garden parties and other events. ty. Under the hospice of the Red Cross the support group prepared an application for the local municipality. The municipality agreed to rent land in the yard of the Red Cross building for five years so

that the group can develop its meeting garden. Since then the group has had several meetings for cleaning the territory and to plant bushes and trees. Next year it is planned to build a veranda and to complete the garden. The garden will be open for all people of Grobiņa, and it will be possible to organise garden parties and other events.

WHAT WE LEARNED

For the members of the support group it was a challenge to take the step forward from simply participating at the meetings to active responsibility. An “action learning” training in the Local Empowerment Network was a good catalysator to develop the original micro project idea. It was a key success factor for the group to have its motor in Andris Leimants. He is a very positive personality who in spite of his own handicap is very motivated and inspiring for the whole group.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future workshop

... the service design phase:

Exodus method and action learning

... the support phase:

Action learning training



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The micro project participants presented themselves to the local community as people who can give and not only take.

The project shows what cooperation of different social service providers and the support group for people with disabilities can achieve. None of these actors could have achieved this by themselves.

The meeting garden offers opportunities for people with different gifts to contribute to a common project. Those who like to work physically can do just that, and after the work is done others have prepared a meal for everyone.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.kalpot.lv>



Mentoring service for prisoners and ex-offenders

Tugiisikuteenus kinnipeetavatele ja vanglast vabanenutele

*Mentors can help released prisoners cope with social reintegration,
especially if trustful relationships are built*



SEMPRE partner: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Location of the micro project: Estonia, different regions

Service user group: Prisoners and ex-offenders

Local network partners: Baltic Crime Prevention Institute,
Foundation for Social Action

WHERE WE STARTED

This micro project differs from the others because it is not based in one local community but is being implemented in several regions in Estonia. The Estonian partners' focus in SEMPRE are families, and it is sometimes forgotten that prisoners have families, relatives and children, all of whom are affected by the sentence and in danger of being marginalised. Imprisoned people tend to have very weak support networks which

causes them to be left alone during and after their imprisonment. A lack of adequate information and social skills makes it difficult to manage the services that are offered to people in need and to ensure that services reach users and vice-versa. The idea for the micro project was threefold: to visit offenders who are going to be released within the next six months in prison, to support them in the phases before and after being released and to create a mentorship programme.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The releasee will get a mentor (voluntary support person), who has passed the corresponding training and who will offer developing activities, converse and discuss matters with the releasee. The essence of the support person service is to help the releasee through counselling and supervision in the performance of his duties, executing his rights or coping with a difficult situation in the person's everyday living environment. The support person will ensure the socialisation of the ex-prisoner and strive to prevent the relapse of the released person to criminal ways.

The second level is the plan to develop and implement a programme for mentors who are themselves ex-offenders and will work with prisoners in the re-entry and desistance process after a period of incarceration. These mentors would work with ex-prisoners while being supervised and supported by regional coordinators. Once trust is established it can be used to guide the person to a better life, to greater independence and involvement in the society.

We find that this can help to empower both, the people who are waiting for their release, but also the people who are already back in the society. Prisonisation together with subcultural beliefs and stigma is a real risk factor for services offered by the prison workers or other authorities being refused. This is why we keep the mentoring system as unofficial as possible.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Interviews with prisoners, action research, focus group interviews, backpack method

... the service design phase:

Theory of Change, Double Diamond

... the support phase:

self-reflection, networking, mentoring, coaching



FIND MORE INFORMATION

www.crimeless.eu

WHAT WE LEARNED

When the project begun we had only the idea of what is missing from the social system for prisoners. The needs assessment through the eyes of also ex-prisoners was a critical start as it gave an insider's view of why the relapses really happen: the services were available, but not accessible because of the barriers inside the people themselves.

The more people we provided our mentoring service to the more information we gathered about the possible downfalls. It has been and continues to be a struggle to show how trust has to be established beforehand, and only then can we really achieve other goals like putting together a plan and following it through. It is essential to really listen to people who have had the experience and to trust their experience.

We are constantly looking over and keeping track of what the main ingredients of our service are. Regular meetings between the mentors and the project managers ensure that we share a common understanding of our work and can assess any issues efficiently. We have formed strong relations with the prisons and also with local municipalities so that our service is known and we can reach more people and also guide them to the social services in the municipalities.



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The mentoring and constant communication builds trust in an environment that is rooted in mistrust

Ex-offenders are empowered by giving their experience a value and a meaning in helping others.

Our activities have relevance for legislative processes, such as a law amendments already in the Parliament that would allow life-longers to work in an open prison and earn money so they can support their families and victims



Newspaper and Web

Refugees and migrants wrote articles to reach and communicate with the resident population to promote mutual understanding



SEMPRE partner: Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein

Location of the micro project: Husum, County of Nordfriesland, Germany

Service user group: Refugees and migrants

Local network partners: MSM Werbeagentur & Verlag GmbH (Friesenanzeiger)

WHERE WE STARTED

Most of the refugees in our group could not speak or understand the German language, they were traumatised and to some extent did not know if their family members were still alive. They lost their homes and were not among familiar faces, some of them lost their identity. They faced an uncertain future, had no jobs and no money.

We organised two workshops with refugees, supported by an Arabic and German speaking teacher to understand their needs and demands. The Arabian teacher was a 'door-opener' for us, since we overcame the language problems and could organise very effective workshops. The refugees explained their wishes and ideas for the future. We collected these ideas and sorted

out which were feasible in terms of financing, premises, relevance and which were meaningful for their integration into society.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

This micro project called "Newspaper & Web" provides a very good way for bilateral integration. The participants write articles about their previous life, the circumstances about their escape from home countries as well as of their life now in Germany. They also focus on differences between the cultures, culinary habits and so on. These stories are being published in a local magazine and on a specific project website for this micro project.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The micro project started with four highly motivated participants. They had and still have lots of ideas for articles. When we started we felt, that we need to spend more time for explaining the contents. The participants spoke little German, but with support from the lecturer, they learned to formulate their ideas in a proper way. The articles were published in the regional magazine 'Friesenanzeiger' in Arabic and German language and on the specific project website of the micro project. The group has now seven participants supported by one volunteer. The articles were a very good way to express themselves and gain self-esteem, as well as an effective communication channel to the local population.



»In our last meeting two participants mentioned that they learned so much in this micro project and they are very pleased to be a part of it. Hearing that was a tremendous praise for me!«

Sonja Wenzel, Journalist at regional magazine „Friesenanzeiger“



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:
Double Diamond and metaplan

... the service design phase:
Double Diamond and metaplan

... the support phase:
Double Diamond and metaplan



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

This micro project offered the participants an opportunity for an enhanced social integration. Writing stories about life situations and perspectives of refugees shall help for a better understanding of refugee wishes and needs in the regional society, the neighbours and regional inhabitants.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.neuinnordfriesland.wordpress.com>



Parents' nights for refugee parents

Forældreaften på Tønder Grundskole for forældre med flygtningebaggrund

Parents take an extra effort to support the well-being and educational development of their children



SEMPRE partner: University College South Denmark

Location of the micro project: Tønder, Denmark

Service user group: Refugees and migrants

Local network partners: Municipality of Varde

WHERE WE STARTED

During the needs assessment with refugees in Tønder it became clear that family matters are one of the main issues for refugees when they arrive in a new country. They are of course thinking about the family they might have left behind, but also about the future of their children growing up in new country and an unfamiliar culture.

In the LEN we had a discussion of how parents with refugee background relate to the Danish

school. We had two fathers with refugee background in the LEN that emphasized the importance of parents supporting their children but also the experience of inadequacy, because of their lack of language skills and consequently the inability to communicate with teachers. The school system is unknown to the refugees, and the skills to help with the children's homework is a major source of concern.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Together, all parties decided to organise a parent's night with the purpose to give parents with refugee background an experience of being able to act as competent parents in dealing with the school and make a positive difference in children's lives in terms of education.

The night started with a shared dinner with each family bringing a dish to a buffet. We had the local music school entertain during the dinner and one boy with refugee background played the oud, an Arabian string instrument. After dinner local sports and leisure organizations had prepared activities for the children while their parents participated in three different workshops:

- A day at school - how do I talk to and support my child about school and homework?

- parents help each other - what challenges do we experience and how can we solve them?
- My child's everyday life - school, leisure, friends - how do I support my child to feel good?

WHAT WE LEARNED

The night was planned by two fathers with refugee background, two teachers from the school, a consultant from the municipality and the LEN coordinator of UC Syd in a co-creation process. Inspired by Theory of Change we worked backwards from the long term-goals of having children who do well in school and get an education, further to the intermediate objective of parents who acts as competent parents in the meeting with school and make a positive difference in their children's lives here and now.

»I am pleased to help here because I think that this arrangement is really good and important. We connect the families and the school, helping children become more integrated.«

Bahzat Atsh, one of the fathers that helped to plan the parent's night



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Focus group interviews (inspired by Appreciative Inquiry), survey

... the service design phase:

Theory of Change. In the three workshops we designed three different processes using discussion questions, sticky notes, examples from parents with refugee background as illustrations and pictures as metaphors.



REMARKABLE

Usually parents' nights at school focus on what the school experiences and the issues the school thinks are important. This time the agenda was set by the parents and the school got a good insight in what parents with refugee background struggle with in relation to their children's schooling. The parents experienced the school and its teachers as open and interested in dialogue. The teachers got new methods for involving parents which they can use for other parent night and cooperation meetings.



Recipe brochure

Recepšu burtnīca

A group of people with disabilities has developed a recipe brochure for people with low income



SEMPRE partner: Diaconal Centre Liepaja

Location of the micro project: Rucava, Latvia

Service user group: People with disabilities

Local network partners: Social service of Rucava municipality

WHERE WE STARTED

Together with the local social service the Diaconal Centre Liepaja organised a conference for people with disabilities in Rucava, a village situated right at the border between Latvia and Lithuania. Many of the people with disabilities who live here have problems to reach the town centre due to the bad conditions of roads and insufficient public transport options. This means that their everyday activities are mostly limited to their own homes, and loneliness and marginalisation were mentioned as some of the biggest problems in their lives. Moreover, most people with disabilities have very low incomes, leaving not much money to buy food and medicine.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The conference led to the creation of a support group named „Ray of Hope“ that has since met once a month. The social service of Rucava is actively involved and supports the meetings with transport and facilities. The group has learned different handicraft and visited other places and support groups. Another activity at the meetings was preparing healthy and delicious meals for the group. Many of the group members receive a monthly food donation from the European Union. There are different products in the box, e.g. oats or flour. The group had the idea to exchange recipes of meals they have prepared, and to collect these recipes and share them with others. The recipe

collections are intended for people who have little money but still want to eat tasty and healthy meals. The recipe brochures were presented by the group members to the social service providers involved in the Local Empowerment Network as well as to other support groups.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Because of the need for organising transport to the meetings and lack of experienced leaders, the group is quite dependent on the local social service. It is an ongoing learning process for the social workers and the support group how to leave the activities in the hands of the service users and learn to take responsibility not only for oneself but also for the group. The Diaconal Centre assisted with training on how to organise support groups and how to use „action learning“ as one of the keys for empowering people. The micro project gave the group a common task, where all the group members could take part, either by preparing meals or by presenting the recipes and preparing the brochures. It is very encouraging to have a concrete result of the meetings and motivates to continue this approach also in the future.

»We all together make a meal and can learn a lot. I can use the recipes for myself at home.«

Videga Kapostina, member of the support group “Ray of Hope” in Rucava



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:
Future Workshop, kitchen talks

... the service design phase:
Exodus method

... the support phase:
“Action learning” training



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The support group has gone a long way from preparing meals for themselves to share their experience also with other people who are living with a low income.

The micro project has slowly developed its own identity as a group, not only as individuals who are meeting in a certain space.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.kalpot.lv>



Significant Godparents

Ristivanemate tähtsus

Reviving the tradition of godparenthood and strengthening godparents' status in society



SEMPRE partner: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Location of the micro project: All of Estonia

Service user group: Families and godparents

Local network partners: Family Centre of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

WHERE WE STARTED

Secularisation in these days diminishes the role of godparents. Still, they are symbols of the Estonian national culture. They are also an influential group on whom a strong family image and the family itself depends. They have the power to strengthen the family and are especially needed in single parent families.

The “Significant Godparents” microproject has the goal to raise the value of godparents in the Estonian society. What does it mean to be a godparent is not at all obvious by itself, the role needs clarification and attainment. To fulfil this goal, a group of godparents in need of educating was formed; training materials for tutoring were prepared, a network and support organisation for preparing someone to become a godparent and also for their life-long assistance is under development. The final step will be to establish a viable godparents NGO.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Initiatively a small group mapped the situation and visualised goals and milestones. In focus groups several needs assessment procedures were conducted. A study on the role of godparents in the national history and traditions has been conducted, and also a white paper on possibilities of the Church to empower godparenthood.

Services on several levels have been developed and provided to godparents:

1. Elected confessions dedicate to give value to godparents as such. Some steps are on their way: establishing the whole-nation-wide Day of Godparents, shaping it into a solid tradition, and providing learning material “Building Stones of Godparenthood” that is going to be used in the churches’ Sunday schools.

2. In collaboration with the Estonian Council of Churches and the Ministry of Justice a Law on godparents is under preparation with the

aim to give the godparents the right to take children who have lost parents, under custody.

3. Self-organising of godparents for mutual support and formation of legal entities for initiation of development projects.

Composition of training materials has been started. The basis for this is a material "Godparenthood's Building Stones", together with the Family Support Centre of EELC. A story-telling competition was organised. Role models were introduced to the wide-range audience.

Establishing good relations with the Estonian Council of Churches and the Ministry of Justice ended up in the conference "Significant Godparents". In the declaration of the conference, proposals for the law amendments were presented to the Government of Estonia to establish the status of godparents in family law.



WHAT WE LEARNED

This initially small initiative has gained a lot of momentum and the NGO will be operating nationwide. "Significant Godparents" thus demonstrates that a small micro project can turn into a larger-scale initiative that affects great number of people and influences on national policy-making.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Focus group interviews, future workshop;

... the service design phase:

Theory of Change, Social Business Model Canvas

... the support phase:

Networking, mentoring, awareness raising, forming a working group for compilation of training materials, mapping of fund raising opportunities, media outreach



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

Empowerment of the godparenthood strengthens the society of Estonia. Also the coherence of families becomes better. This can be measured quantitatively: about 200 000 persons who have been baptized by the traditions of people's church have godparents. It can be estimated that the godparents influence about 20% of the Estonian population. The influence of the micro project reaches as far as to national legislation. The godparenthood movement is strongly self-motivated, so no large investments from outside are needed.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

Facebook page "Ristivanemad"



Stories to Support Integration

Tarinoita kotoutumisen tueksi

A film project initiated by migrants to show their lives in their new environment



SEMPRE partner: University of Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius

Location of the micro project: Kokkola, Finland

Service user group: Migrants

Local network partners: Public employment and business services, Foreign office, Integration port

WHERE WE STARTED

In the needs assessment it was discovered that migrants wanted to speak themselves about how life is after moving to Finland instead of having service providers speak for them. This is very much in line with the empowerment approach, giving the people a voice to actively shape their lives.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

We started from the information which we had acquired through needs assessment that

migrants wish to speak for themselves about how moving to Finland is. Several meetings with service providers (public employment and business services, integration services, etc.) to discuss possible ways to fulfil this need brought about the idea of films where migrants themselves would describe their path to the Finnish society, including success stories, barriers and obstacles they have encountered. Then migrants were contacted who were interested in participating and the films were produced with the help of a media professional.

Videos include the stories of families' or individuals' day-to-day routines in their new environment, practical considerations of the Finnish health care system or the path to entrepreneurship.



»When migrants and newcomers share how good life in rural areas can be through their own words, it gives more strength to the meaning than if we as a public authority say this. We see this in our job: refugees want to move to bigger cities, and when they do, they struggle with finding a job and a social network.«

Anna Kotka-Bystedt, service co-ordinator, migrant services in Pietersaari



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Action research, interviews

... the service design phase:

Action research

... the support phase:

N/A



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

- This micro project resembles support from one community member to others. The format of an instructive video makes it possible for wide usage beyond the local context.
- Furthermore, this approach is giving a voice to migrants themselves.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://maahanmuuttajatmaaseudulla.wordpress.com>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRVmt2ca_v4



SIVANs day care centre for dogs

SIVANs hunddagis

For some people it is difficult to find a job that suits their individual abilities. So why not create your own work place?



SEMPRE partner: Sunderby Folk High School

Location of the micro project: Sunderbyn, Luleå, Sweden

Service user group: Long-term unemployed with disabilities

Local network partners: Swedish Public Employment Service, Municipality of Luleå

WHERE WE STARTED

Many jobs in the open labour market today are not accessible to all due to increasing specialisation and efficiency measures. If you have been long term unemployed and/or have a disability it can be a real challenge to get and to keep a job. This is the situation for the people that are involved in this micro project. Their common is a work place that suits their individual abilities and their strengths. The needs assessment was conducted in June 2017. The result was obvious – a need

for more understanding from the surroundings regarding the special needs the service users have, a need for jobs and trainings that are flexible and adaptable.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The participants of the micro project set up a day care centre for dogs that provides a safe and fun place for dog owners to leave their pet while they're at work. They also want to offer a meeting place and café for dog owners where they can bring their

dog. The latter will be a completely new service in Luleå. It will also provide job training opportunities to unemployed people. We aim for the dog day care centre to become an economic association (cooperative) in the near future.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Sometimes it takes several attempts to realise a good idea. Sunderby Folk High School has a history of supporting social cooperatives that directly aim at creating jobs for vulnerable groups. A social cooperative running a dog care centre recently had to close down due to issues with the premises they were renting. Three representatives from the old dog care centre also participated in the needs assessment. At that moment there were not enough participants willing to move forward with the idea of a new dog care centre (or any other cooperative idea) – even though there was a great demand for its services (both day care and job training). Time passed by and Sunderbyn decided to start up a process together with local stakeholders to once again scan the interest among end-users. This time we were able to mobilise and recruit participants with the help of the Swedish Public Employment service. Now we have 16 (!) participants in the micro project – all working to create their own work place together.

»In two years SIVANs is an established and well-functioning cafe and day care centre for dogs with happy customers, dogs and staff.«

All participants' joint vision



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future workshop

... the service design phase:

Future workshop and Business Model Canvas

... the support phase:

Education (social entrepreneurship and dog care/hundskötarutbildning), study visits, networking, communication/marketing



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The service users participate with 100 percent of their own ability

The micro project enhances the participants well-being, not only because it gives them a future job opportunity but because they get to work with animals. For many dogs are a big interest and being around animals has a potential to release stress.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://maahanmuuttajatmaaseudulla.wordpress.com>



Stress relief balls

Stressipallid

Young people with mental handicaps produce stress balls that help pupils relax and concentrate in school



SEMPRE partner: Foundation for Social Action

Location of the micro project: Võru and Põlva county, Estonia

Service user group: Families, children with mental and intellectual disabilities

Local network partners: Enterprise Estonia, Rakvere Kolmainu

WHERE WE STARTED

The idea to start producing stress relief balls came from a mother with an autistic child. She was also a representative of an NGO named „Emili elu“ and had made these balls for her child because she noticed that interacting with it relaxed the child and helped it to concentrate on school. The teachers of the child also liked these balls after seeing the immediate effect. At the same time in another part of Estonia a group of mentally handicapped young people wanted to gather to work together, but had no place to do so. They eventually found help from a church, Rakvere Kolmainu congregation, which offered

a space which was not yet ready to use but had to be renovated first. When we first visited the future workspaces, they looked like a run-down ruin which needed a lot of attention and work.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The rooms were renovated with the help from the pastor of the congregation Tauno Toompuu. Thanks to his support, the workspaces were opened just in a few months and it was possible to start producing the stress relief balls. The young people with disabilities enjoyed making the balls a lot, since it brought them together and kept them occupied. It also relieved their own

tensions and helped them to communicate with each other and their instructors.

The stress relief balls made their debut on a small country fair in Tartumaa called Vasesepa in July 2017. It was a real community event with different parties selling and buying products. The next big appearance of these wonderful stress relief balls happened just two months later at the Opinion Festival in Paide. The balls hit a nerve, and all of them were sold. We were also able to gather good contacts for future work and raise the awareness for working handicapped people. The same happened at the Opinion Festival a bit later.

Lastly in September 2018, during a conference for church workers who are dealing with different people with various needs, each worker was given such stress relief ball to aid them in their work.



WHAT WE LEARNED

As a result of this micro project and with the help of the stress relief balls, the handicapped young people in Rakvere are able to produce stress relief balls but also other products. Moreover, children with autism were given an outlet and different parties of the community joined for a mutual goal. Giving these children a sense of belonging and being able to make a contribution is also an important outcome. As a result of this process a Community Center for Rakvere congregation was established and the sense of community was reinforced.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Logical Framework Approach

... the service design phase:

Logical Framework Approach



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

It started with a small idea and has brought about so much impact.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sds7Ykop1E>



The Tailor Cooperative

Sömnadskollektivet

A social enterprise that combines work integration of migrants with producing sustainable textiles



SEMPRE partner: Coompanion Norrbotten

Location of the micro project: Luleå, Sweden

Service user group: Migrants

Local network partners: Swedish Public Employment Service, Municipality of Luleå, ALMI

WHERE WE STARTED

The unemployment rate among migrants is relatively high compared to the average rate for the whole population in the County of Norrbotten. It is even higher among migrants with low or no education and those who have difficulties learning Swedish. SEMPRE met with a group of women in this specific situation and conducted a future workshop with them. To get closer to the labour market and an income they needed to learn Swedish, improve their health, get to know locals and access networks. After the needs assessment, which was carried out in spring 2017, Coompanion Norrbotten got in contact with a local entrepreneur – a woman who had been working as a tailor and designer in her own studio in the city centre for many years. She was looking to renew her business – she wanted to have colleagues and take on more social responsibility. Instantly, we saw a potential match.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Coompanion set up a series of meetings with the local entrepreneurs and interested migrant women from the needs assessment workshop to see if they shared the same visions. Some of them did and this created a base for a new tailoring business idea. We moved forward by applying for funds from the Swedish Public Employment Services, the County Council of Norrbotten and a private investment fund. We recruited more women with the help of the Swedish Public Employment Service. In October 2017 the micro project started and in parallel we registered the economic association “Sömnadskollektivet” (The Tailor Cooperative). The aim of the micro project was to develop Sömnadskollektivet into a sustainable work integration social enterprise. The participants received theoretical as well as practical training in social entrepreneurship, mentoring and support with marketing and

communication. The municipality offered the micro project the possibility to use their premises for production and to borrow sewing machines and other equipment.

The Tailor Cooperative provides two different services: tailoring services to both private and public customers and job training to unemployed people in the municipality. By the end of the project the first participants have received job placements. The Tailor Cooperative is the first work integration social enterprise in Norrbotten, which explicitly aims at improving the integration of migrants into the labour market. Besides social sustainability the cooperative focuses on environmental sustainability, for instance by making new products out of recycled fabric and offering repair cafés.



»The micro project has meant that we´ve met key persons who have supported our process.«

Anna Heikki, local entrepreneur and supervisor at Sömnadskollektivet

WHAT WE LEARNED

An obstacle we faced was that the language skills among the participants were more limited than we had expected. Moreover, the sewing skills also varied. The training got more time demanding, and some elements such as sales strategies were more difficult to implement than first expected. For this reason we applied for an extension phase of the micro project support from the Swedish Public Employment Service. The Local Empowerment Network that was created in Luleå by Coompanion Norrbotten in the beginning of the project was very important for the development of the initiative. Both Luleå Municipality and the Swedish Public Employment Service have been stakeholders in the Local Empowerment Network from the beginning, and both have been very supportive of the micro project.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future workshop

... the service design phase:

Future workshop and Business Model Canvas

... the support phase:

Training programme in social entrepreneurship, study visits, coaching, support with application writing



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The Tailor Cooperative now has a sales agreement with the grocery cooperative Coop regarding reusable fruit and vegetable bags.

The Tailor Cooperative makes use of and creates job opportunities from knowledge that is generally forgotten (mending/repairing) and blends in knowledge from other cultures and traditions (new products).



FIND MORE INFORMATION

Facebook page "Sömnadskollektivet"



Training firms for migrants in commerce and gastronomy

Übungsfirmen 'Handel' und 'Gastro'

Practical training to develop skills and foster employment of newly arrived migrants



SEMPRE partner: Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein

Location of the micro project: Husum, County of Nordfriesland, Germany

Service user group: Refugees and migrants

Local network partners: Mentoren für Unternehmen in Schleswig-Holstein, Job Centre Nordfriesland

WHERE WE STARTED

Most of the refugees who participated in our needs assessment could not speak or understand the German language, they were traumatised and to some extent did not know if their family members were still alive. They had lost their homes and their communities. They faced an uncertain future, had no jobs and no money.

At that point, we organised two workshops with refugees, supported by an Arabic and German speaking teacher to understand their needs and demands. The Arabian teacher was a 'door-opener' for us, since we overcame the language problems and could organise very effective

workshops. The refugees explained their wishes and ideas for the future. We collected these ideas and sorted out which were feasible in terms of financing, premises, relevance and which were meaningful for their integration into society.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

As a result of the needs analysis, enhancing job opportunities was identified as a most pressing issue. As our first micro project we organised a training firm with a specific focus on 'Trade & Commercial Administration'. The micro project had workshop character and the participants set-up a training company supported by two

mentors. They got an understanding and implementation of commercial data with practical examples. The participants passed through fictitious sales warehouse and purchase departments. This training simulation was so successful and well-received that we organised a second training firm, which had the focus on the tourism and food services industry. The participants were additionally trained in practical gastronomy work once a week. The participants improved their language skills and received knowledge, skills and experience in the commercial fields. The micro projects was meant to help the refugees to find more easily a job, an internship or an apprenticeship.

WHAT WE LEARNED

In both training firms the participants were trained by two coaches. We realised quickly that the requirements for the participants were too high and thereupon changed our training method and training material. Scripts were converted to simple language with more pictures and less text. Role-playing exercises were implemented in the workshop and the lecturers used a clearer and slower speech. It was more important to learn the necessary soft skills through integration with practical company-related exercises and the lesson content was more adapted to the language level of the participants. The participants worked intensively and received a quick overview of job-related circumstances and requirements

in Germany. We worked with people from diverse backgrounds with another work culture and attitude. We all needed to change our perspectives, and we all have improved our intercultural skills.



»This particular project was needed for the refugees for a fast integration into the German labour market.«

Berthold Pohl, Mentor in the training firms



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Double Diamond and metaplan

... the service design phase:

Double Diamond and metaplan

... the support phase:

Double Diamond and metaplan



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The training firms enable migrants obtain an overview of job-related issues and they helped the participants to find an internship/job more easily.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://semprenordfriesland.wordpress.com/>



Training for assistants

Asistentu apmācības

Lack of professional support inspired a group of people with disabilities to develop their own training programme for assistants



SEMPRE partner: Diaconal Centre Liepaja

Location of the micro project: Durbe, Latvia

Service user group: People with disabilities

Local network partners: NGO “Hand in Hand”, Grobina’s support group for people with disabilities “Be Together”

WHERE WE STARTED

The micro project is based in the small district of Durbe which has about 3.400 inhabitants. People with disabilities previously had no place for meetings and joint activities. Low incomes, loneliness and lack of assistance were the prevailing problems mentioned in the needs assessment. The support group in Durbe developed after a social worker from Durbe had participated at our conference in the neighbouring town of Grobina. She suggested that we should hold a similar conference also in Durbe. We contacted the local social service and the Evangelical Lutheran congregation, who helped us organise the conference. The participants expressed their need to come together on a regular basis.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

In the support group there are people with disabilities and their support persons from different age groups. There are young people with disabilities who have no job and education as well as elderly people who need care and help in their everyday activities. The group developed the plan to use their own resources instead of waiting that somebody else will solve their problems. So they jointly developed a training programme for assistants. The programme includes eight training sessions about different topics, including social rights, first help, counselling and support tools for people with disabilities. The idea is that after finishing the training the group members can support each other not only at the meetings

but also in everyday life activities. Self-help and cohesion will lead to a more independent and confident life.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The micro project become more challenging when it turned out that it was not possible to get a long-term support from the local social service and that the congregation was not capable to be the leading force. Nevertheless, the group was highly motivated to meet and to develop the activities and the micro project. Another

problem occurred when the leader of the group got a job and couldn't take responsibility for the group anymore. About half a year there was no leadership in the group and it took some time until they decided to continue the idea of the micro project. As the local support group for people with disabilities could not develop a stable relationship with the local social service the group decided to found the NGO „Roku rokā“ (Hand in Hand).

»I can learn and get to know a lot of new information – for example what rights people with disabilities have, how to give first aid etc. This knowledge is helpful for us.«

Ruta Blumberga, member of the NGO „Hand in Hand“



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future workshop

... the service design phase:

Exodus method

... the support phase:

“Action learning” training



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

It is noteworthy how the group took responsibility for themselves and started to act together. The idea to prepare assistants can be a starting point for creating jobs in the neighbourhood in the future.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.kalpot.lv>



Wirkstatt

A network and meeting point set up by and for long-term unemployed persons



SEMPRE partner: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, Church in the World of Work (KDA)

Location of the micro project: County of Plön, Germany

Service user group: Long-term unemployed persons

Local network partners: Wankendorfer Building Cooperative for Schleswig-Holstein and others

WHERE WE STARTED

The project staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany was interested in finding out more about long-term unemployed persons and obtaining an impression of their own view on their life situations and problems. A 'future workshop' seemed to be a good method to connect with the long-term unemployed persons in the County of Plön. The workshop revealed that one of the biggest problems that unemployed people in the rural parts of the county have is a lack of contacts. They feel very lonely, and because of their lack of financial resources they can hardly take part in social and cultural life to make new connections. Thus, as a result of the future workshop the wish for community and networking or a kind of meeting point was born. Out of this situation we founded the **Wirkstatt**. The participants came up with the name and the idea to work on various relevant topics in this place. Important topics for them were how to deal with the service providers such as the local job center or how to work against the negative image of long-term unemployed people in society. In addition, they wanted the **Wirkstatt** to provide professional input on various topics concerning the life situation of long-term unemployed people and their families.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The **Wirkstatt** has become a meeting point for long-term unemployed people. It is located in a neighbourhood meeting point operated by the regional building cooperative. A group of long-term unemployed men and women and a social service provider have been involved in it from the beginning on. Other social service providers join the **Wirkstatt** periodically and provide conceptual and practical support to the group. The group plans activities by themselves or in cooperation with social service providers and enterprises in the County of Plön. The innovative aspect of the **Wirkstatt** is that there was no comparable offer in the County before. It brings long-term unemployed persons and social service providers and companies together in a new way. The long-term unemployed feel more active and creative and are recognised as a partner at the same level in these networks. This has a very positive impact on their feeling of self-confidence and self-efficacy. Once premises had been found, the members of the group created, printed and distributed a brochure. In addition, the group further examined their goals as they had been identified in the future workshop with the local job center as a partner. There were three meetings with the goal to set up a counseling and de-esc-

lation center for conflicts between long-term unemployed and job centers. This goal will be pursued further. In addition, one social provider supported the group with social competence training with the aim to prepare them for difficult applications and counseling interviews.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The cooperation with local social service providers such as the County's education officer and the equal opportunities officer was very important

»To me, the opportunity to exchange with social service providers such as the job center on equal footing and the feeling of being seriously heard were the most important experiences in the Wirkstatt.«

Jens Theede, member of the Wirkstatt

for the development of the **Wirkstatt**. It was a challenge that some very dedicated partners left the network because they changed their jobs. Finding new network partners with the same level of commitment to the project is a real challenge and an ever ongoing process.

We are currently working with the key stakeholders to establish a long-term perspective and develop an organisational structure beyond the lifetime of SEMPRE. The involved service users are highly important for the Wirkstatt. Many of those who participated in the beginning of the project cannot take part anymore due to favourable developments such as finding a job placement. On the one hand, this is quite a positive effect of the **Wirkstatt**. But on the other hand, it means that the numbers of participants has been decreasing, and to counter this a lot of promotion and communication of the Wirkstatt is necessary.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

... the needs assessment phase:

Future workshop, interviews

... the service design phase:

Business Model Canvas, Theory of Change, moderation, Advance Training

... the support phase:

Problem tree, Theory of Change



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

There were positive changes in the private and professional lives of the participants during the project. Many of them took important development steps through participating in the Wirkstatt and received new impetus for their lives.

Stigmatisation is a real problem and we noticed many prejudices in society towards "the long-term unemployed". The project was able to reduce this, at least on the side of the local partners



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://sempreploen.wordpress.com/>

Yoga and social interaction for single parents

Yoga mit Begegnung für Alleinerziehende

Single parents come together to support each other and nourish body and mind



SEMPRE partner: Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein

Location of the micro project: Büsum, Dithmarschen

Service user group: Single parents

Local network partners: Diaconie of Dithmarschen, County of Dithmarschen

WHERE WE STARTED

In the needs assessment stage with single parents, we identified some issues which are of socioeconomic nature and can have severe consequences for the well-being of the single parents. Many of them suffer from a lack of time to take care of their own health, because they have to look after their children. In addition, single parents also often lack the financial resources to visit sports or health classes. What is more, there are very few opportunities to meet other single parents to exchange information, give advice or to simply make friends. In meetings with different social institutions, the single parents expressed the wish to have some hours a week where they can work out and do something only for themselves. Based on these findings, the idea of yoga classes for single parents was born, and a group of social service and health providers came together to start organising them. We found out that these providers did not see the problem only in the lack of physical activity of single parents; they also saw it in the lack of a support system. So, together with the LEN Dithmarschen partners a combined concept was developed that includes both yoga and a social component.

»Yoga is in general the highlight of my week. Well, besides the ice cream next door after class.«

A participant of the yoga class

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

The yoga classes are not only for sport or for physical health, but they combine social interaction with physical activity – a perfect mix for a healthy body and mind. The social interaction is important for the mental health and allows the single parents to create a network. They use this network to exchange relevant information, to support each other and to find new contacts in the area. To some of these classes social service providers are invited to talk about specific topics. These topics are always chosen by the single parents (legal topics, claims, counseling etc.), with



»The other members of the micro project became more and more important to me. It is a special atmosphere because you are with likeminded people and you do not have to be worried about being judged because of your lifestyle. I think this is a good precondition for me to be able to relax.«

A participant of the yoga class

an emphasis on what is important for them. This gives them the chance to use these meetings to change or improve their own life situation.

WHAT WE LEARNED

At first, the place for these classes was Büsum, but even though the wish was identified there no one showed up in the classes. Word was spread to single parents in Meldorf which showed great interest. After the venue had been changed, the participants started to meet weekly for the yoga lesson while child care is provided. As a result, the single parents find great relief and can focus on themselves in order to harmonize body and mind. This way, they can better master the stress of the demanding task of single parenting.



EMPOWERMENT TOOLS USED IN...

- ... the needs assessment phase:
Round-table, interviews, problem tree
- ... the service design phase:
idea selection
- ... the support phase:
N/A



WHAT'S REMARKABLE

The combination of social interaction and physical activity is very convenient. In this organised structure, the possibility to exchange information with social service or health care providers has a different format and quality. Also, the participants acquire the ability to learn how to use the exercises outside the class to reduce the strain on everyday life as a preventive health care measure.



FIND MORE INFORMATION

<https://sempredithmarschen.wordpress.com/>

MORE SEMPRES PUBLICATIONS:

The **Empowerment Handbook** provides an overview of the different empowerment tools used by the SEMPRES partners in the development of the micro projects. It contains practical advice and tips for social workers and service providers.
www.sempre-project.eu/handbook

The **Guidebook for Empowerment Training** describes training modules that were jointly developed and piloted in several SEMPRES partner regions. It can be used for inhouse trainings and education of future social workers in empowerment and user involvement.
www.sempre-project.eu/training

The **Roadmap for Organisations** is meant to be used by leaders of organisations in the social sector. It provides inspiration and guidance to implement user involvement as an organisational practice.
www.sempre-project.eu/roadmap

The **SEMPRES policy recommendations** address policy makers in the fields of social affairs, regional development and innovation. They highlight the importance of promoting social innovation and listening to marginalised groups, particularly in rural areas.
www.sempre-project.eu/recommendations

THE SEMPRES PARTNERSHIP



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| 1 Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein (DE) | 10 Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EE) |
| 2 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany (DE) | 11 Foundation for Social Action (EE) |
| 3 Academy of Economics Schleswig-Holstein (DE) | 12 The Foundation for Lifelong Learning PERITIA (PL) |
| 4 Nova University of Applied Sciences (FI) | 13 Coompanion Norrbotten (SE) |
| 5 Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius (FI) | 14 Sunderby Folk High School (SE) |
| 7 Diaconal Centre Liepaja (LV) | 15 University College South Denmark (DK) |
| 8 University of Latvia (LV) | 16 Nordregio (SE) |
| 9 Lutheran Diaconia (LT) | 17 Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (LV) |

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What happens when social service providers and service users work together to improve the life situation of people living in rural areas? In this brochure you will find the stories of 26 micro projects that were initiated in the framework of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region project SEMPRE and that demonstrate how co-creation of social services can lead to success.

