

SELVET - Social and Emotional Learning in Vocational Education Evaluation of the Kick-off Meeting, 14-16th November 2013 Budapest

The objectives of the first SELVET meeting in Budapest were:

- To introduce and get to know each other
 - To participate in lectures¹² and fields trips³ with organisations involved in the theory or practice of social skills training/mental health education in VET
 - To review and revise project activities, the work plan, distribution of tasks and decide on exact dates for the next partner meetings
 - To participate in cultural activities
 - To evaluate the meeting.
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1. Overall...

The bringing together of a diverse group of knowledgeable people with differing backgrounds, skills and experiences left a very positive impression on all. Some commented on feeling some uncertainty at the start, specifically for Anna in acting as host and organizer, and for Creative Youth, in knowing how their work would fit and contribute to the project. All found those present helped in creating a very open and productive atmosphere by being willing to listen to, and encourage each other, and by being flexible and adaptable. The discussions were interesting and meaningful. By the end of meeting, there was greater clarity on what each brings to the project and we had identified a shared vision and goals. However, much work remains to be done.

¹ Presentation about the Hungarian VET system/programmes aiming at developing pupils' social skills given by Szilvia Németh, Managing director, T-Tudok

² Presentation about social competence promotion elements in the Hungarian (public) school system and the results of a model program given by Dorina Tápai (PhD student), University of Szeged, Social Competence Research Group

³ Visit to Bercsényi Miklós Élelmiszeripari Szakképző Iskola (**vocational school of food industry**)<http://www.bercsenyi-bp.sulinet.hu/>.

2. Something that captures the experience...

For a number of people, this was the visit to the vocational school. As the comments below show, this was a revealing and somewhat troubling experience.

- *“The clash between the stunning architecture and warmth of the central city and the bleakness of both the area and school itself on the outskirts”*
- *“the visit to the VET school (Bercsényi) - heartbreaking and inspiring”*
- *“The visit in the school. Middle of suburb-nowhere, walls unpainted for decades, a director struggling with lack of means necessary and lots and lots of young people heading into an uncertain future”*

Others chose the realisation of the importance of the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), the range of the field and how relevant it is in the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET). The visit to the [Invisible Exhibition](#) was seen as a metaphor for our journey – starting out in darkness, trying to find a way out or make sense of things and realising that much work is needed to get to this point.

3. Achievement of the meeting objectives

The consensus was that the meeting objectives were met i.e.

- *“to get to know each other, to think about what we would like to achieve by this project, to get an impression of VET and SEL programmes in Hungary”*

We started to build trust and respect in the group and a level of comfort in working together. We highlighted and identified what each brings to the partnership, although more work is needed to clarify exactly how this will be used in the project implementation. We clarified the project vision and goals, and agreed on the objectives and an initial timetable of activities. The presentation and lectures had helped in understanding the situation with VET in Hungary. There is some concern that our theory and speculations are rather idealistic and it not yet clear how the outcomes of our meetings will lead to practical applications and initiatives that will be of use to others. People went away feeling motivated, inspired and optimistic about the project.

4. The meeting process

- *“I would describe the meeting as highly interactive. I especially loved the way people paid attention and encouraged one another. Overall I have the feeling that everybody was able to share and give information”*

The mix of activities – formal and informal discussions, presentations, visit – was appreciated. There was plenty opportunity to contribute, and for questions and discussion. Anna’s flexibility was appreciated. The central city location was good although the room was somewhat uninviting –dark, small and a bit stuffy. It was felt that the order of things could be changed – we went into a lot of detail before exploring the project vision, goals and overall outcomes. The lectures were interesting, although it would have been beneficial if we had spent some time setting out the context beforehand. After lunch is not a great time to sit listening to presentations, and they tended to be rather long. The process was rather flat at times and we should seek ways to bring more energy into the group dynamic – larger, lighter room may help, more energised and passionate discussions, more attention to start of day activities to get things going.

5. Suggestions for the next meeting in the Netherlands

- send papers out a few weeks beforehand; all partners discuss and prepare
- more work-inviting environment; intersperse lectures with more interactive, practical tasks for the partners; discuss together what we have learnt from any lectures/ visits
- have some examples of how SEL has been applied- be able to ask questions of experts/ institutions applying them about what works, what is missing, what we can do to make SEL more effective

6. Expectations for the meeting in the Netherlands

- to get a deeper understanding of what SEL means and how we can set up a program
- to see and learn about practical applications of SEL
- to decide if our project is about collecting data and exploring existing practices in our different countries, or if we are aiming at practical application of our findings
- looking forward to the meeting, hoping it won’t be too academic.

Dates of next meetings

- Afternoon March 19th – 21st March 2014 Netherlands
- June 11th -13th 2014, Gottingen
- Oct 19th (Ski Sunday), 20th -22nd 2014, UK

Arising Questions

- Who are the best group for supporting and delivering SEL best practice?
- What best practices are available regarding SEL in vocational education?
- What are contextual and (teacher/ trainer) competencies related (pre-)conditions for SEL in vocational education?
- At what stage does SEL training for teachers/leaders/psychologists happen?
- Creative Youth: Where can the arts fit in ? Who can we identify how our work outside VET can support work on VET?
- Why is SEL not working, if it isn't, and how can that be changed?
- At which level -EU; individual regulations of countries; schools; teachers' training/work conditions; pupils and programmes? And where would we position our ideas and solutions?
- Are there core elements of actual SEL practices in Europe? If so, what are they? Are they, or could they be evaluated and standardized (which parts)?
- Minimum techniques? – with little or no budget/ time/ resource – what is the core of SEL?
- Are there practices which can equally be applied in all participating countries – assessment of programmes, practices? Which parts of them can be applied, which need to be adapted to a certain country (a modular system for future development)?
- How can policy-makers be influenced? Who else? (research?)

Action list

	Action	Who	When
1	Research e.g. in UK, what kind of SEL/ SEAL-related activities are going on?	All partners	ongoing
2	Logo	Creative Youth (Chinese logo form René)	early 2014
3	Invite a teacher in VE/ SEL to The Hague	All partners	
4	Keep record of local activities	All partners	Ongoing
5	Blog and website	Roberto	Ongoing
6	Send stuff for blog to Roberto	All partners	As and when
7	Send reading list	René to send/ all read!	asap
8	Write meeting report	Anna	asap
9	Send evaluation forms to all partners	Elizabeth/all to complete and return	End Nov 2013
10	Write evaluation report and circulate	Elizabeth	Early Dec 2013

Final quote

“compliments to Anna for her initiative, flexibility, pleasant guidance”

Recordings from the meeting

Thursday 14th November 2013 (day 1)

'Today we have'

- meeting
- had an interesting and useful day
- got acquainted with each other – a very nice group ☺
- started to highlight our potential
- made a start; created positive expectations; thanked Anna for initiating this project
- got to know each other
- had 2 interesting , informative talks – good job!
- a short ice-breaker game; information about each other; a common language
- got to know each other a bit (it was a nice experience)
- met and got to know each other
- learned a lot
- had interesting presentations
- been a little light on content
- met and shared
- a wide range of ideas
- realised that there is potential for future cooperation (common goals)

'Now I feel'

- full of ideas that need to be organised
- comfortable within this group
- good in the company of very nice and interesting people
- I am looking forward to talking about ambitions
- filled with ideas for the Gottingen meeting
- motivated
- like I understand more about the project than I did before
- interested and enthusiastic but in need of a break
- happy
- optimistic about our project
- a bit tired but willing to proceed tomorrow
- I feel somewhat tired, grateful to the two presenters of this afternoon
- tired but hopeful

Friday 15th November 2013 (day 2)

'What we have achieved/ not achieved'

- Achieved: a timeframe; the first version of project goals/ central questions; an atmosphere of cooperation
- Not yet achieved: A clear demarcation of 'our' field; a clear enough picture of what talents/ potential each of us brings to the project
- started to build trust and respect in the group
- highlighted and identified what we each bring to the partnership
- thought about, and formulated our goals; very important- saw the real life conditions of the Vocational Education System in Budapest
- know what we need to do next and by when; produced a clear idea of our endpoint (vision/ goal)
- achieved: description of objectives/ goals
- we got to understand about each others activities
- we formulated goals on organizational and on project level
- we got an impression about VET in Hungary
- bringing together professionals with different kinds of experience, knowledge and interest to form a group with a common task: SEL
- due to our visit to the voc.ed. school, realized that our theoretical speculations on the SEL-topics are very idealistic but unfortunately too far away from their realization which depends not only on our results and will but also on the way each single community supports such initiatives – politics- lack of funding- lack of personnel
- created the basis for a productive partnership

'How we interacted and worked together (process)'

- interaction: generally constructive and pleasant; wish: more in-depth discussion of the what and why of SEL
- we and our discussions were intergrative, interesting, meaningful and sometimes widening my horizon – thanks for that☺
- I am a quiet outsider of the group because I don't speak English but I think the group worked in a cooperative way
- everyone was willing to listen and give space to each other
- would change a few things but overall good- we worked well together

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