

CREATING LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE

Focus groups results

Introduction

This report analyses the results of 5 focus groups, planned as qualitative research activities, and held in May 2017 in Spain, Italy, France (Decazeville and Nîmes) and Poland, in the framework of the Project Creating Leaders for the Future: no limits to entrepreneurship and disability (<http://leadersforthefuture.eu/es/>).

GOAL

Analyse the project's main intellectual products by gathering opinions of a diverse range of stakeholders, in order to elaborate their final version, as planned outputs of Creating Leaders for the Future.

The key intellectual products are:

- **TRAINING METHODOLOGY and materials for entrepreneurship (IO2)**
- **GUIDE to work systems and accompaniment activities (IO4)**

PARTICIPANTS

All the groups had a number of participants between 7 and 10.

All of them counted on representatives of public and private organizations, which:

1. operated in the field of the professional activation of people with disabilities and/or people at exclusion risk
2. operated in the field of the labour market
3. were experts in high education for young people or adults
4. were experts in entrepreneurship
5. were entrepreneurs with and without disability
6. were a business school

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND METHODOLOGY

The interviews were recorded (audio) while 1 representative from the organizing partner led the discussions.

One other person observed the development of the activity and took notes.

The used methodology was based on the sociology model, with a thematic analysis which had to:

1. Analyse each speech
2. Classify thematically according to the exchanged subjects
3. Organise the thematic scope
4. Compare the results with the guide

The following analysis was carried out immediately after ending the focus group activity.

For each focus group question, each partner:

1. - Summarized the main ideas
2. - Included observations such as body language or differences in opinions
3. - Created a concept map

AGENDA

1. INTRODUCTION—introduction of the moderator, a few words about the project, and the presentation of the goal of the research

Time: 6-7 min

Information about the project

*“The meeting was organized in the framework of the project **Creating Leaders for the Future: no limits to entrepreneurship and disability**. The project is realized thanks to the **ERASMUS+ Programme, KA2: Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices-Strategic Partnerships for adult education**. The project is realized in a partnership of 5 organizations. Its main objective is to design an **entrepreneurial training path** for people with disabilities, based on previous experiences of the partners, as well as on previously existing good practices in each country. The program will be the result of the detection, identification, and analysis of unmet needs and existing gaps in training offer for*

people with disabilities. The most important output is a new, improved **training model of entrepreneurial training**, fully tailored to people with disabilities, which will offer the opportunity to be put into practice in each partner's country, as well as in other European countries that have a similar social and labour situation."

The goal of the research

"The goal of the research is to gather your opinions on the key elements of solutions which were elaborated during the project. At the meeting, we will discuss 2 main products (**CONTENT TRAINING METHODOLOGY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING METHODOLOGY**).

2. INFORMATION about the idea of the focus interviews, the role of the moderator, and recording the meeting

Time: 3 min

3. INTRODUCTION OF THE MEETING'S PARTICIPANTS

Time: 10 min

4. WARM-UP – introductory questions

Time: 20 min

5. DISCUSSION

Time: 60-90 min

Research area 1 - TRAINING METHODOLOGY

Research area 2– ACCOMPANIMENT ACTIVITIES TO WORK SYSTEM

Research area 3– GUIDE TO WORK SYSTEMS

6. SUMMARY AND CLOSING

Time: 20 min

PREVIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

Considering the environment of the analysis, we have encountered some difficulties in the following areas:

- PARTICIPANTS'S COMMENTS: comments were not presented following the same patterns by each country, thus making impossible to analyse opinions according to the professional profile of each participant.
- Not all the questions and subjects were discussed in all countries with similar length and depth, although all the main topics were discussed in every focus group
- Different groups did not focus on the same things, even though the initial input was the same questions. As a consequence, this diversity should be taken into account when making final conclusions

FINAL RESULTS

Entrepreneurship and training: Needs

Entrepreneurship and training for people with and without disabilities

1. Improve the number and quality of the training

Real need for training in entrepreneurship detected in every country in terms of its number and quality.

“They have no knowledge of the possible tools”. France.

“There is a weak quality and efficiency regarding the courses organized to start a business.” Italy.

“Not organized in a very professional way, poor quality, unprepared trainers” Poland.

2. Use training to legitimize the entrepreneur

Everyone can become an entrepreneur if he/she is enough motivated and undertakes it for good reasons.

An entrepreneur without disabilities in Spain underlined that *“we have to pay attention to distinguish between true entrepreneurs and people who need a job”*.

Other stakeholders noticed that training is a wonderful tool to give right skills to the future entrepreneur and the posture giving them a legitimacy and a self-confidence.

“You can be born with the right attitude and the system can kill it very quickly, or you may not have it, but you can learn it from a good training environment at early stages.” Spain.

“The entrepreneurial training must change the posture of the person.” France.

3. Innovation is offering the entrepreneurs customized activities

Entrepreneurs without projects are motivated and have skills to undertake new adventures, but they need help to find a great project.

“There are tracks, we have a national level, we do this with people who do not have projects but are looking for projects by particular channels in franchises.” France.

Entrepreneurs with disability profile

4. Take into account that there are different profiles and motivations

Becoming an entrepreneur is all about being:

- able to overcome the constraints of disability,
- a factor of social inclusion,
- a tool for personal and social success

“There are several profiles, there are people with disabilities who simply take advantage of the system and others who want to succeed more because they have a disability...” Decazeville.

5. Highlight the added value of the mixed groups during the training

Mixed groups can be really useful and help trainers.

The groups in Italy and Poland focused on that subject underlining that a mixed group allows to:

- improve trainers' actions
- help trainers to organize elements with more attention
- structure well but are still flexible
- improve the way to teach
- help teachers to understand specific aspects

The complementarities in the group are also really important for the socialisation and immersion.

The group in Nîmes underlined that the benefits are for everyone in terms of socialisation, thanks to the added value of the exchanges and their capacity to *“help to develop posture and identity, the sense of belonging to the entrepreneurial community”*.

“A socialization (ability to be collectively formed, to collaborate) is a competence in its own that can be learned; Individuals can neutralize themselves if not at ease with the group” France.

The 2 groups in France focused on **the quality of the entrepreneurs with disability which could be transferred** to the rest of the group.

Italy, too, mentioned that to *“have a student with disability can (...) transfer knowledge”*. In fact the described qualities are:

- the ability to innovate to overcome barriers
- the ability to take different paths to reach the same destination
- fight aptitude (will, determination...)

“The fight aptitude developed by disabled people is to be valued with other publics” France (Nîmes).

Methodology

Contents: technical, cross-curricular skills and practical activities

1. Offer both technical and cross-curricular skills

Both cross-curricular and technical skills are important in the training:

“the entrepreneur needs both cross curricular and technical training” Spain.

In France, Italy and Poland, the groups considered that both are complementary.

“the training should focus on developing “soft skills” but combined with specific knowledge” Italy.

2. Propose a training with technical skills

Technical skills are important in order to understand the interlocutor and environment for the entrepreneur. Spain, Poland and France focused on the fact that the entrepreneur does not have to become an expert in computability or legal framework but has to be able to communicate in all those subjects.

“training methodology should take into account how to build future entrepreneur awareness in the field of very important things, for ex: how to deal with the economic risk, with tax issues and possible fail” Poland.

The highlighted contents are:

- Operating an account
- Financial, banks
- Legal framework
- Social-economic aspect
- Tolls to found economic resources
- Economic environment (risks, taxes...)

3. Access the training in more than cross-curricular skills

Cross-curricular skills are considered the most important area in training by the participants in each country.

“Trainings which are trying to combine and develop 'soft skills/competencies' will be always better than sitting and learning 'how to be good at bookkeeping’ ” Poland.

All the groups defined **some cross-curricular skills that should be taught:**

- A certain autonomy
- Relational skills
- Socialisation
- Ability to develop a network of resources
- Ability to take risks
- Stress management
- Adapt oneself to economic aspects (markets, management...)

4. Include more practical activities in the programme

France, Poland and Italy noticed that **the programme needs more practical activities.**

Practical activities seem less important than technical and cross-curricular skills but they still have a place in the training. In fact the methodology proposed in the guide focused as well on personal support which could be more helpful than practical activities for many reasons:

- Increase the activities of the programme
- Develop the capacity of the project
- Have a testing phase

The last point is proposed by the group in Poland and it is interesting because it takes in account an “alumni support” that we are going to talk about in the “ecosystem” explained further on.

“the program should be extended to include: more internships opportunities, more practical activities and so on” Poland.

A customized Path

5. Evaluate the stage of the entrepreneur

Various degrees of entrepreneurial attitude: more than disability, what matters is to take into account the various stages in the path of business creation:

“Let’s take into account that not everybody has to start entrepreneurship in the same way and from the same stage” Italy.

“It is more a story about the person in front of the entrepreneur in a situation of disability” France.

In Nîmes, the group paid a special attention to proceed step by step during all the entrepreneurship path *“to check and develop coherence throughout the project”*.

The group in Poland noticed that a direct support could be given at every stage to follow all the changes.

We will focus on this idea in another part of this report which will focus on personal support.

“Future entrepreneurs need direct support at every stage of their business trip and the mentor/tutor is the one who can follow all the changes in individual path of training” Poland.

6. Adapt the training for entrepreneurs with disabilities

All the groups agreed that the programmes have to **be normal training with punctual adaptation for entrepreneurs with disabilities.**

“make a “normal support” with a structure dedicated to disability (specific accompaniment)” France.
Poland goes further by saying that *“Every ‘entrepreneurship program’ should be focus on a person and individual needs, competencies, qualifications”*.

Coaching could be the solution for the “Customization (...) *“and it should be based on a deep knowledge of the entrepreneur and the mutual agreement on the path”* Spain.

“with coaching, it is simpler to understand the specificities” France.

The link between the project and the personal capacity is the key. Indeed, it is important to take into account:

- the link between the type of project, the disability and its constraints
- the need to have a personal support or in a mixed group
- the work on the growth of the professional skills including personal aspect

In Decazeville in France the group proposed different **adaptation related to specific disability** as using TICs.

“In a “punctual and specific manner” as translators of the sign language” France.

7. Customize the training length

There are different opinions on this aspect.

Six months of training is not enough according to Italy, Poland and some people in France.

The length of the training depends on the person and

“each case is unique” Decazeville, France.

“we still have to keep in mind that the training is important, but the intensity and length of it should be totally customized” Spain.

8. Take advantage of the added value of a customized path

The added value of a customized path have been noticed by the participants of each country. The main issues highlighted by the European participants allow:

- a total flexibility and link between the project and the person
- a complementary process dedicated to the management of disability
- an efficient way to teach
- a concertation of each entrepreneur
- a proper process adequate to individual needs, limits

“Individualized attitude is a huge value of the program because each aspect of the training process can be well prepared and adequate to individual needs, individual limits and predispositions” Poland.

Personal support

All the groups agreed that customized path is the most important thing in training for all the entrepreneurs and especially people with disabilities. Personal support will be the tool to make the training adapted to the need of the person.

The mentor

1. Do not hesitate to give a mentor to each person

Mentors are very important figures in the training according to the groups in Italy, Spain and Poland because he/she is the person which offers the practical and business environment.

“mentor is a very useful and practical figure.” Poland.

“In my opinion, the mentor is very useful if he/she can act right when it’s needed.” Spain.

2. Choose the mentor with special care

The mentor has to be chosen accordingly to the needs of the entrepreneur. For example, it should be a person at the head of a company specialized in disabilities. It could be, too, someone working in the same sector of the future entrepreneur.

“Entrepreneur should have an opportunity to work among “networking groups” and cooperate with people who have experience in leading company, organizing start-ups and so on” Poland.

3. Use the mentor as an example for encouragement and continuity

The mentor is a really good support to keep the motivation on during the entrepreneurial process.

Each country mentioned the essential help of the tutor:

- Continuous accompaniment in many tasks
- Entrepreneurial community immersion
- Essential support to not lose motivation during the long entrepreneurship process
- Great support for psychological and motivational aspects

The tutor

4. Encourage tutor used to working with people with disabilities

All the groups recommend **a tutor who should be used to work with people with disabilities**

“an expert in disability and entrepreneurship.” Spain.

Tutors should be used to:

- The detection of disability and factors of social inclusion
- The understanding of disabilities *“without an excessive attention to this particular feature of the person”* (France)
- The identification of the activities in order to valorise the skills and abilities

“specifically takes into account students with disabilities: such as the identification of activities that could better valorise their skills and abilities.” Italy.

5. Help with psychological and emotional aspects

Italy and Spain noticed that **the tutor is a real help especially for emotional and psychological needs**. The group in France (Decazeville) focused on help about managing between professional and personal life and a very positive attitude consisting in finding the solution instead of finding problems in order to give a positive energy to the entrepreneur.

“It is with all the entrepreneurs more or less modified in the personal life. If I create a business I should take stock of my personal life...” France.

6. Have a global approach for the entrepreneurship

As we have seen in the Customized path’s part of this report, it is important to take into account the different stage of entrepreneur’s path and give him/her a global vision related to his/her own experience. Regarding the focus groups, **the tutor is the one who should have this global vision** and

“accompany throughout the process” Nîmes, France.
“has a global vision of business creation, the entrepreneurship process and can guide them at different stages”
Spain.

7. Be careful of a potential dependency

Spain and France highlighted that the tutor and even the rest of the training and accompaniment staff should not create dependency and should teach the entrepreneur how to make things himself/herself instead of doing it for him/her.

“a tutor has to push whenever it’s possible, but at the same time, he has to make the entrepreneur feel that he’s at the entrepreneur’s disposal.” Spain.

The group in Decazeville explained that the training system is a “*toolbox*” for the entrepreneurs but they have to use it themselves and must take the time they want to.

“The entrepreneur wants to be the creator of his activity and live it. He wants to “do it his own way.” France.
(Decazeville)

Alumni Support

8. Offer a support after the training in the entrepreneur's life

The aim of offering a support after the training is an added value to help him/her to go on with the business idea or activity.

The testing phase could be done within the Alumni support.

“testing phase is absolutely necessary to establish a successful company and provide ongoing support” Poland.

“we should also talk about the ecosystem that supports the entrepreneur, and especially about the alumni support. The entrepreneur should not be left alone after the agreed training is over.” Spain.

Ecosystem

The guide's proposal on sustainability

1. Adapt the guide to normal environment

The suggested ecosystem should be adapted to normal environment and not only for people with disabilities. All the groups agreed that the proposal is really relevant and could help entrepreneurs without disabilities, too.

“The general development of all the aspects that are necessary for an entrepreneur has been very well analysed and it's well structured, like in an engine. This will surely help to apply it to other normalized environments”.
Spain.

“Concertation on person, individualized attitude is a huge value of the program because each aspect of the training process can be well prepared and adequate to individual needs, individual limits and predispositions”.
Poland.

2. The guide answers to actual and future needs

The group in Spain focused on the fact that **the guide answers the current and future needs of the entrepreneur with disabilities** and without disability, as it answers to the basic needs of a human being in the learning phase.

“If we think about learners with disability or with special needs, the project design is perfectly aligned with their needs, as surely with the future ones” Spain.

3. Propose an ongoing process

Even if the guide answer to the basics needs, the society change and **the guide have to pay attention to adapt the guide to those changes with an ongoing process.** The group in Spain illustrated by saying that

“10 years ago these guides wouldn’t have made sense (...) so I think and I hope that in 10 years these guides will be obsolete”.

The group in Poland highlighted that **the challenge is to make the educational system more flexible and open to adapt to the changes.**

“this is the biggest challenge (...) inspire and change education system to be as much flexible and open as it can be : ‘how to adapt to change.... That will be the future of education” Poland.

The definition of the special needs will evaluate, too, and the new person with disability will have to be taken into account in the training.

“A multitude of handicaps must be taken into account: social, societal, physical, mental ...” France.

The ecosystem network

4. Involve all the actors who are linked to the entrepreneurs or/and disabled people

All groups talked about many different stockholders who should be involved in the system in order to help the future entrepreneur with disabilities:

- Entrepreneurs who are or were involved in the program: for an immersion
- Associations who could be facilitators to undertake it
- Universities to get the students that maybe could want to become entrepreneurs
- Structures working with disabled or medical world to show them the way and work with them, too, during the training

- Companies to help the entrepreneur as mentors
- Personal environment of the entrepreneur

“The management of disability can be cumbersome for the environment of the disabled person (family). To undertake it can be an additional constraint that increases the burden of the disability => risk of rupture related to the environment” France.

5. Build a strong complementary networking

In each country it has been highlighted that the **network ecosystem has to be very strong to support the entrepreneur with disability with complementarity between all the stakeholders.**

“Need a network to create its structure, fight against isolation, share experience, federation of actors, resources”. “It requires a specific logogram for disabled people - entrepreneurs ...” France.

“mostly thanks to local NGO’s who took responsibility for complement national policies in the field of disability, social-professional activation, education system, entrepreneurship” Poland.

6. Identify the person or structure who is going to be the key entrance of the ecosystem

To achieve more visibility it is important to have one structure in charge to welcome the entrepreneurs and coordinate their path and their relationships with the other stakeholders.

This structure will be in charge to:

- Welcome the entrepreneurs and evaluate if they are available to do the training
- Be the general coordinator
- Connect all the entrepreneurs
- Link all the structures
- Identify all the funds to help the entrepreneurs
- Communicate with all stakeholders involved

“We have these difficulties of people followed by full structures. Because there are plenty of stakeholders. All must know and then there must be a leader who brings everyone together in order to move forward ...” France.

The groups in France, Spain and Italy seem to agree **that the association or/and NGO should be the coordinator, the key entrance of the ecosystem**. That kind of structure is more flexible and involved.

“This might lead us to think that the implementation of these guides will be easier in NGOs or private entities, rather than in the public sector and the public entrepreneurship systems and programs” Spain.

External communication

7. Have a better external communication

Except in Poland, there is a lack of communication. It is really important **to attain future entrepreneurs** about the training and possibilities they have.

“For disability, lack of information and relay info and specific accompaniment” France.

“people with disabilities in Poland are well informed about their training possibilities. During years they get involved in some many projects organized so they ‘stay in touch’ and know about every action planned” Poland.

8. Use different channels for external communication

Except in France, all the groups mentioned different way to get to future entrepreneurs:

- Use the network for a face to face presentation
- Use social network

“how to reach entrepreneurs attention, thanks to the use of the interactive communication (social media, interactive platforms, Youtube channels and a better use of Facebook/Twitter/Linkedin).” Italy.

Resources and regulation to implement the guide idea in the national system

9. Improve the financial and regulation system for entrepreneurs with disability

France and Spain noticed that there are problems about regulation and financial system for disabled entrepreneurs. There is not enough resources and/or not enough clear. The regulation, as well, especially in France, seems dysfunctional.

“Many companies still have prejudice regarding the recruitment of the handicapped, prefer to pay fine” France.

“I also see the resources’ availability problem” Spain.

10. Find resources and stakeholders to implement the guide in the national system

Each country, except Poland, mentioned **the difficulty of implementing the guides in national systems**. The problem will be in the financial resources to implement the ecosystem, but also in the management of this new system proposal. Most of the time the administrations are not that flexible.

“We should understand better in terms of resources to be put in the activities, what we would need”

Public administration in Spain.

“lack of existing efficient tools in the Italian system and the delay in the application of the existent laws” Italy.

However, we have seen in the previous part that **the coordinator could be an NGO who could organise things with more flexibility**. The participants from NGO or trainers have been more optimistic about the implementation. In Poland, too, the group supported the idea that NGO could be in charge of it.

“This is good rather for NGO’s than public institutions. NGO’s have better profound knowledge and they understand that that type of methodology, that type of approach is a must these days” Poland.

Several **recommendations have been proposed in different groups to find resources**:

- A better organisation in the national system
- The using of European funds

“role of public institutions (e.g. Public Labour Offices, Ministries as Managing Authorities) who were so active in organizing standalone projects and joint activities with smaller organizations.” Poland.

“it will be essential using the European funds/projects and initiatives.” Italy.