



Project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347
Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health
of students and teachers / HAS, Erasmus+



Funded by
the European Union

Training program for staff in educational organizations

How to increase the capacity of staff?

Project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347

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Title „Training program for staff in educational organizations. How to increase the capacity of staff?“

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Association of Psychologists in Bulgaria, Varna, Bulgaria, 2024, ISBN 978-619-7781-08-3 (print edition) ISBN 978-619-7781-09-0 (e-book, PDF)

The current „Training program for staff in educational organizations. How to increase the capacity of staff?“ has been developed under the project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347 Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers / HAS, Erasmus+ and as such product it is distributed for free. You can copy, download or print content for your personal use, and you can include excerpts from this book in your own documents, publications, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgement of the authors and publisher as source and copyright owners is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to aypbvarna@gmail.com

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I. Project information

This document is part of Project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347 „Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers/ HAS “, Erasmus+ program, with the financial support of the European Commission.

Project period: 01/11/2022 - 31/10/2024 (24 months)

Leading organization: Association of Psychologists in Bulgaria, Varna, Bulgaria

Partner organizations: Hristo Botev School, Bulgaria; IMS Private School, Cyprus; and WYZSZA SZKOLA BIZNESU I NAUK O ZDROWIU (WSBINOZ), Poland.

The mission of the project is to modernize and strengthen the capacity of the education and training system to address the main challenges in today's world, to improve mental and physical health and well-being (incl. of teachers/trainers and students/trainees), to promote social, civic, and intercultural competencies, and intercultural dialogue. This mission is achieved through the development of the products in accordance with the individual needs of both trainees and trainers, and partner schools at the organizational level.

The project's aim is also to help deal with the unfavorable learning conditions caused by the difficulties in online learning, social distancing, and immobility. It focuses on the improvement of basic skills as a prerequisite for the prevention of early school leaving, incl. from vulnerable groups.

The main project objectives are:

- Increasing the knowledge of mental health, safety and management of psychosocial risks;
- Overcoming the consequences of social isolation and immobility;
- Overcoming and preventing stress and difficulties in online/distance learning and teaching;
- Increasing students' motivation to learn;
- Improving the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and students;
- Increasing the motivation for teaching and career development of teachers;



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- Providing opportunities for career and personal development, increasing the professional capacity and basic skills of teachers and other educational staff;
- Greater effectiveness of activities for vulnerable groups in the field of inclusion and diversity education;
- Creating mutual assistance and intervention groups;
- Promoting common values, civic engagement and participation.



II. Introduction

The document WP3A3 “Training program for staff in educational organizations - How to increase the capacity of staff?” is designed for staff working in educational organizations (for example, teachers, trainers, educators, psychologists, pedagogical advisers, school counselors, and other pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff) and is created under project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347 “Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers / HAS, Erasmus+. Association of Psychologists in Bulgaria (APB), WYKSZA SZKOŁA BIZNESU I NAUK O ZDROWIU (WSBINOZ), Poland, Hristo Botev School (Bulgaria) and IMS Private School (Cyprus) contributed to the development of the product.

The Training program was developed based on an in-depth research and assessment of the needs of the staff in educational organizations in activity WP3A1 and also based on the activity WP3A2 Strategy for planning the professional development of employees in accordance with individual needs.

Based on the developed WP3A3 Training program, motivational trainings for school/educational staff were conducted in 3 main areas:

- Improving personal development (Personality-motivational and potential development, addressing deficits and needs);
- Increasing professional development (Roles, dealing with burnout and rotation, the forecasting process);
- Career development and inclusion in EU projects and international networks, incl. Erasmus+.

The Motivational Trainings were conducted by an expert/trainer. After the training, the participants filled a short feedback form to assess the effectiveness of the Training program and its implementation in the partner countries- Bulgaria, Poland and Cyprus. Then, a report was prepared including analysis of the results obtained in the different countries with important conclusions and recommendations which serve as a basis to improve the product itself.

The Training program was created as such a product was missing in the partner countries – Bulgaria, Poland and Cyprus. The aiding materials for teachers/trainers who were struggling in



recent years with the distance learning environment still remain insufficient. The lack of adequate Training program to increase the capacity of staff in the educational field (teachers, trainers, educators, pedagogical advisors, counsellors, and other pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff) leads to a lack of motivation in those experts for personal and professional development, as well as insufficient inclusion in EU projects and international networks (such as Erasmus+). The general focus is to develop the competencies and skills of educational staff through motivational Training based on this product.

With the help of the Training program, the educational staff can gain important knowledge, skills and competences in terms of motivation for personal and professional development, as well as inclusion in EU projects and international networks. This can also support them in dealing with the negative consequences of distance learning and can improve their overall productivity at work. The Training programme focuses specifically on increasing the capacity of staff in educational organizations and involves various strategies aimed at enhancing skills, knowledge, and effectiveness. Here are some effective ways to achieve this:

- **Professional Development Programs:** Offer continuous professional development opportunities such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and training sessions. These programs can focus on pedagogical innovations, technology integration, curriculum development, classroom management, and leadership skills.
- **Mentorship and Coaching:** Implement mentorship programs where experienced educators mentor newer staff members. Coaching sessions can also provide personalized guidance and support to improve teaching techniques and professional growth.
- **Collaborative Learning Communities:** Encourage collaboration among staff members by forming learning communities or professional learning networks. This facilitates the sharing of best practices, innovative ideas, and resources among educators.
- **Technology Integration Training:** Provide training on how to effectively use educational technology tools and software for teaching, learning, and administrative purposes. This includes training on online teaching platforms, educational apps, and digital resources.



- **Specialized Training for Specific Needs:** Identify specific areas where staff may need additional support, such as special education, language instruction, or handling diverse student populations. Offer targeted training programs to address these needs.
- **Leadership Development:** Offer leadership training programs for administrators and potential future leaders within the organization. This can include courses on strategic planning, team management, and organizational development.
- **Feedback and Evaluation:** Establish a system for feedback and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of training programs. Use feedback from staff and students to continually improve and tailor professional development initiatives.
- **Encourage Research and Innovation:** Create an environment that encourages educators to engage in research and innovative teaching practices. Providing resources and support for innovative projects can boost staff morale and capacity.
- **Partnerships and External Opportunities:** Foster partnerships with other educational institutions, industry experts, and organizations to provide staff with access to external training, conferences, and learning opportunities.
- **Cultivate a Learning Culture:** Promote a culture of continuous learning within the organization. Encourage staff to pursue further education, certifications, or advanced degrees by providing support and incentives.

By implementing these strategies, educational organizations can create a supportive and dynamic environment that enhances the skills, knowledge, and capacity of their staff, ultimately benefiting the quality of education provided to students.

Our hope is that the present product will be a useful resource for reaching a European dimension in improving the capacity and skills of educational staff.



III. **Need, purpose, tasks, users and main stages for applying the training program**

The **need** for a new Training program for staff in educational organizations is determined by recent research (Alenezi et al., 2022) which shows that teachers/trainees have experienced different types of challenges in teaching, especially during the period of the pandemic which was characterized by distance / online learning. These results were also confirmed by WP2A1 Research on the attitudes of students and teachers the well-being and mental health, an activity which is part of Project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347 Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health of students and teachers / HAS, Erasmus+. The Research focused on studying and analyzing the consequences for students and teachers of distance learning in an electronic environment.

Challenges outlined by Alenezi et al. (2022) and our research, such as lack of live communication with the students, increased demands, and difficulties in time management and preparing content appropriate for the online study environment, can have a negative impact on teachers/trainers' motivation for personal and professional development. In addition to this, the motivation for international cooperation and collaboration (in projects) may also have been negatively impacted because of different COVID-19 travel restrictions that took place in the last few years.

After identifying the need for a new Training program for staff in educational organizations, the following goals/objectives of the product have also been identified:

General objective: Capacity building of schools to work transnationally and between sectors

Specific WP objective: Development of key competencies and “basic skills”. Expanding the multi-spectrum horizons of teachers, their additional knowledge and skills related to development and prosperity. Development of International relations and cross border cooperation.

The main **purpose** of the current document is to increase the capacity of staff in educational organizations by addressing the issue of reduced motivation for personal and professional development in teachers/trainers, as well as in the area of international collaboration and cooperation (in projects). The Training Program also has the following **tasks**:



- Improve the competencies of pedagogical and non-pedagogical/non-teaching staff working in educational organizations (incl. in the sphere of career and professional development);
- Increase the professional capacity of staff working in educational organizations and improve their adaptability to the competitive and dynamic environment;
- Expand the multi-spectrum horizons of staff in educational organizations, their knowledge and skills related to development and prosperity.

The main **users** of the WP3A3 Training program are: teachers, trainers, educators, psychologists, pedagogical advisers, school counselors, and other pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff working in educational organizations.

Main stages for applying the training program (incl. stages of implementation):

- **Preparation:** The first stage includes identifying the needs of the target group (staff/employees in educational organizations), selection of participants, selection of training games and activities, preparation of presentations and materials, logistics, preparation of the training rooms, flipcharts, multimedia etc.
- **Application stage / stage for implementation of the Motivational training for staff in educational organizations:** The second stage includes motivational trainings for school/educational staff (based on the developed WP3A3 Training program) conducted in **3 main areas:**
 - Improving personal development (Personality-motivational and potential development, addressing deficits and needs);
 - Increasing professional development (Roles, dealing with burnout and rotation, the forecasting process);
 - Career development and inclusion in EU projects and international networks, incl. Erasmus+.

The Motivational Trainings for staff in educational organizations (based on the WP3A3 Training Program) were conducted by an expert/trainer.



The Application stage includes the following documents / resources: preparation of attending lists, program/agenda, presentations (based on the WP3A3 Training program), feedback forms to assess the effectiveness of the training and the WP3A3 Training program to be completed by all participants (the feedback forms can also be in Google Forms format and in paper format).

- **Assessment stage:** The third and last stage includes the preparation of a report/analysis based on the results obtained from the feedback forms collected by all participants in the motivational Training for educational staff. The report includes relevant graphics and/or tables with the results (raw data), their analysis, as well as important recommendations and conclusions. This Assessment stage serves as a basis for improvement of the final product.



IV. The importance of motivation

Learning about motivation as a psychological concept is important because it helps the understanding of human behavior. It is valuable to know where motivation comes from, what are the factors that change it, what increases and decreases its levels, and which aspects of it can and cannot be changed. All of this helps answer the question of why some motivation types are more beneficial than others (Souders, 2019).

Motivation as a phenomenon reflects the individual uniqueness of each person and supports the gaining of positive outcomes such as increased performance at school or at work, improved sense of well-being and quality of life, personal and/or professional growth, or a sense of purpose/meaning. Motivation can be seen as a way to change a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Souders, 2019).

The term 'motivation' is derived from the Latin verb 'movere' (meaning: to move) and according to Hawthorne (2021), it can be defined as "our enthusiasm for doing something". It is the 'why' behind a person's actions. Motivation can be seen as the reason for a variety of human behaviors. Its main purpose is to help people set goals/objectives (be it long-term and/or short-term) and find effective and successful ways to achieve them.

In the field of education and training, motivation is beneficial for students because it helps them focus their attention on an important goal/outcome (Hawthorne, 2021). Through motivation, learners can better avoid distractions, and therefore be more capable to sustain their attention for a longer period while studying. Students who have increased motivation levels, in general, exhibit behaviours which can be defined as "goal-orientated". They have positive characteristics such as: taking initiative more often, showing resilience (the ability to adapt to challenging situations), being more curious than their peers, and caring for and respecting their work. Students who are more motivated are better equipped to be successful throughout their learning journey.

According to Hawthorne (2021), finding ways to improve motivation is important, because it enables a person to:

- Change their behaviour, thoughts and feelings;



- Develop different competencies, skills and knowledge in the area they are interested in;
- Be more curious;
- Set goals (be it short-term or long-term);
- Develop particular interests and hobbies;
- Make future plans;
- Develop their talents;
- Increase their engagement in learning activities.

Increasing the engagement of students or employees/staff in a lesson or work task is something only an educator/trainer with talents can achieve. Motivating learners or staff to reach their true potential, can be very challenging and difficult, because the experience of motivation is often on an unconscious level. Students or staff with low levels of motivation are often disengaged and lack concentration, which can lead to difficult behaviours (Lamb et al., 2021).

Strategies that can be used for increasing motivation levels (according to Hawthorne, 2021):

Motivation can be a very powerful tool to keep learners and staff going, in spite of barriers or challenges that they may face. It energizes students and employees to reach their full potential. An individual with high levels of motivation has the following positive qualities: they are committed, energetic, and innovative, they see the value in what they are doing, and are determined to achieve their goals.

According to Hawthorne (2021), there are numerous benefits of motivation which include:

- Increased persistence and resilience
- Increased wellbeing and quality of life
- Increased school/work performance and results
- Improved cognitive processing
- Increased efforts at school/work
- Higher levels of attendance
- Improved creativity and innovation

Motivated learners and employees achieve their potential and find success more often than those who are not sufficiently motivated. Thus, motivation is very important for effective learning and



work. It also enhances wellbeing and the quality of life of the student or worker. Understanding how to improve people's motivation is vital, so that they can have the best start in life.

Strategies that can be used to improve motivation (according to Yarborough & Fedesco, 2020):

- Perceptions of ability/skill

When individuals perceive they have a high level of ability/skill at an activity (be it at school, university or work), they are more likely to experience improved motivation.

- Effort attributions

When individuals believe that their effort will lead to positive results, they are more likely to experience improved motivation.

- Success experiences

When individuals are successful at an activity (be it at school, university or work), or watch others have success, they are more likely to experience improved motivation.

- Support and encouragement

When individuals are sufficiently supported in completing an activity (for example, through encouragement and provision of the resources needed to fulfil the task), they are more likely to experience improved motivation.

- Clear expectations

When individuals know exactly what is expected of them on a particular activity, and have clearly defined goals/objectives, they are more likely to have improved motivation.

- Sufficient challenge

When the difficulty of the task matches the individuals' skill levels, they are more likely to experience higher motivation to do the activity.

- Receiving feedback

When individuals receive positive feedback that their efforts and skills matter, and are task focused (and not ability focused), they are more likely to experience improved motivation.

- Growth experiences



When individuals engage in learning or working activities that promote personal or professional growth, and when they experience an increase in their skills/abilities and performance, they are more likely to experience improved motivation levels.

- Perceived task difficulty

When individuals perceive an activity or task as not very difficult, they develop higher motivation levels and self-esteem in their own abilities.

- Stability attributions

When individuals attribute their academic and/or professional success to a stable factor such as their skill, then they will have higher expectations for success in the future. However, if they attribute it to an unstable factor such as luck, they will be more uncertain and less motivated to continue the activity. Features of Motivation.

The main features of motivation are the following (according to Naushad, expert for GeeksforGeeks, 2023):

- **Motivation is an internal feeling:** It is a psychological concept and it cannot be forced into existence. It is an internal feeling, generated within the person, which makes them exhibit a particular behavior. Feelings like needs, desires, urges, and other have a large influence on human behaviour.
- **Motivation is the cause of goal-directed behaviour:** As mentioned above, behaviour is influenced by motivation which helps individuals reach their goals/objectives. It also helps to reach organizational (work) and personal goals.
- **Motivation can be negative or positive:** Motivation can be positive in the form of rewards (e.g., additional pay, incentives, promotion, recognition, and other) or negative in the form of force (e.g., punishment, demotion, and other). Positive motivation provides incentives to a person to reach the goal/objective, while, on the other hand negative motivation causes fear in individuals so that their behavior is influenced to act in the appropriate way. It has been proven that positive motivation is far more effective than negative motivation.



- **Motivation is complex:** Every individual is unique and has different expectations, perceptions and reactions. A certain type of motivation (positive or negative) may not have the same effect on all people because it's very difficult to predict human behavior, in general. Thus, motivation is a complex process.
- **Motivation is a continuous process:** Human needs are without limits, the completion of one need gives rise to another, and so on. Thus, motivation can be seen a continuous process, because it does not end with the completion of a certain need.

Importance of Motivation (according to Dembo & Eaton, 1997; Naushad, expert for GeeksforGeeks, 2023)

The importance of Motivation can be explained in the following way:

- **Motivation increases performance:** Motivation helps with satisfaction of the needs a particular individual has. Performance can be greatly increased through motivation because it bridges the gap between the capacity and willingness to work. As an outcome, employees/staff work with dedication and use their skills fully to improve their efficiency levels.
- **Motivation aids in changing a negative attitude to a positive one:** It's no secret that a positive attitude helps to achieve organisational (work) objectives more easily. However, sometimes it is the case that an employee may have a negative attitude towards the work or the organization, in general. Motivation can be the solution to this problem as it helps to change this negative attitude to a positive one, mainly via appropriate rewards, such as encouragement, support and praise for good work. When the employees are sufficiently motivated, they work in a positive way towards the organisational (work) objectives.



1. Motivation for personal development

According to Sajid (2016), personal development is a lifelong process through which individuals can evaluate their skills/capabilities, understand their goals/objectives and manage their own tasks and activities in order to achieve their aims. It is a process that involves the improvement of skills/competencies and attitudes which can in turn lead to the successful achievement of objectives. Motivation for personal development, in particular, has the potential to bring success in numerous spheres of a person's life like family, profession, education and training, the financial and health spheres.

The first very important step to begin any task or activity is mental preparation. A person must have a clear vision of what they desire to achieve specifically and why (the reason behind their desire). The answer to these questions is crucial and is at the basis of the psychological phenomenon that is motivation.

Sajid (2016) also states that self-motivation is an important skill for achieving personal and professional development. A person who has a clear understanding of their wishes, values and priorities in life can find out what really motivates them and, in turn, can help them reach fulfilment of their goals/objectives. In general, a self-motivated individual has the knowledge and skills on how to attract opportunities for development and necessary resources, because they are not afraid to do what is needed.

That is why, investing in self-knowledge and understanding is crucial to developing high self-motivation levels. In truth, what causes a person to leave their comfort zone and become more capable to chase their dreams and professional goals, is what drives them to increased self-motivation as well.

According to Sajid (2016), there are different factors that can motivate a person's behavior. These factors can be a mixture of both internal (such as thoughts and emotions) and external (such as life situations and experiences) aspects.

In order to be sufficiently motivated, a person must have set clear goals and have a strong desire



to work towards their achievement. The capability of translating motivation into specific actions and behavior depends on the development of willpower, determination and focus as important personal qualities of the individual who is working toward accomplishing their aims.

Strategies for improving self-motivation for personal development (according to Leticia Miranda, accessed November 2023 via <https://www.pushfar.com/article/self-motivation-11-ways-to-increasing-personal-motivation/>):

- **Personal Planning**

Personal planning is vital for personal and professional achievement and success. Through an adequate planning process, a person can maintain the balance between the personal and professional sphere of life. A detailed plan helps with knowing where to start and what the first steps must be. It can be a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly plan, depending on the person's own objectives.

- **Self-confidence**

Self-confidence is crucial for motivation. Being insecure, afraid of risk taking or making mistakes can prevent an individual to achieve success in the personal and/or professional sphere. It's important for a person to have good self-knowledge, especially about their strengths and weaknesses (positive and negative characteristics) in order to use their positive qualities to their advantage.

- **Setting Achievable and Realistic Goals**

Having set achievable and realistic goals helps a person recognise their skills/abilities, and aids in tracking their progress toward the objectives. Visualising the final result helps some individuals to persist in the task or activity, to feel more motivated, determined and more satisfied during the whole process.

- **Investing in Relationships**

Without any doubt, all humans are social beings, and as such we need other people to achieve our dreams and goals/objectives. Others can help us by giving their feedback and recommendations or suggestions. They can also provide us with valuable ideas and support



or encouragement. A good relationship with mentors, superiors, co-workers, and others is important and contributes to higher levels of motivation for personal and professional development, especially when sufficient support is provided.

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

According to Ackerman (2018), the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) created by Deci and Ryan (1985) links three phenomena: personality, motivation, and optimal functioning. The theory posits that there are two main types of motivation—intrinsic and extrinsic. Both types play an important role in shaping individuals and their behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), the first type - extrinsic motivation – influences human behavior by being based on external sources, and it results in external rewards (such as a rise in salary at work, better grades at school/university, and other). External sources in general include grading systems, employee assessments, different kinds of awards, and the respect and of other people (co-workers, peers, and others).

In contrast, intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual. It is an internal drive that serves as an inspiration to behave in specific ways, and includes core values, interests, and sense of morality (Ackerman, 2018).

At first impression, it may seem that intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are total opposites. Intrinsically driven behavior keeps the individual in line with their “ideal self”, whilst extrinsically driven behavior makes the person conform with the standards of other people. However, this is an oversimplification and there are other important distinctions in motivation types. Self-determination Theory (SDT) also differentiates between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

According to this classification of motivation by Ryan and Deci (2008), autonomous motivation is a type of motivation that comes from internal sources and can include motivation from extrinsic sources for people who identify with an activity’s value and how it aligns with their sense of self. On the other hand, controlled motivation comprises of external regulation, and is a motivation type where a person behaves out of desire for external rewards or fear of punishment (Ackerman, 2018).



And to make things more complicated, there is a third type of motivation called introjected regulation, which can be defined as motivation from “partially internalized activities and values” such as avoiding shame, seeking approval from others, and protecting the ego.

According to Ryan and Deci (2008), when a person is driven by autonomous motivation, they can feel self-directed and autonomous. However, if the person is driven by controlled motivation, they may feel pressured to behave in a certain way, and therefore, they feel little to none sense of autonomy or self-direction.

In conclusion, research has consistently shown that when it comes to the individual’s personal development, intrinsic motivation causes increased persistence and resilience, better psychological wellbeing and quality of life, and improved work or academic performance. The theory of Deci and Ryan (2008) assumes that people are born to be self-motivated, to exhibit natural curiosity and interest, however, in reality some conditions must be in place in order for a person to have high levels of intrinsic motivation.

2. Motivation for career development

According to Babić (2023), motivation drives people toward progress, fuels ambition and serves as an inspiration to reach their full potential. It does not matter if the person is just beginning their career, or if they are already well-established in their field – having high levels of motivation is important for future success and growth. Motivation plays a crucial role in career development, in particular, because it helps the individual with setting goals/objectives and overcoming challenges that may occur during their professional path.

Ways motivation can impact your career (according to Babić, 2023):

- **Goals/Aims and Aspirations:** Motivation sets the basis for all decisions related to career development, helping the person define what exactly they want to achieve and giving them the drive to take action towards their objectives.



- **Focus and Determination:** Motivation gives an individual a clear sense of meaning and helps them stay focused on their goals/objectives (be it long-term or short-term), avoiding things that may lead to distraction and lack of concentration.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** When motivation levels are high, the person is more likely to generate new ideas and find creative solutions to different issues that may occur. This is also related to the drive for innovation and can lead to breakthroughs in the particular career field.
- **Resilience:** Career development can often be challenging and demanding, because it requires resilience (the ability to successfully adapt to difficult life experiences) as a personal quality to overcome different problems. Motivation can give the person inner strength to move towards progress, despite the challenges.
- **Increased Work Performance:** Motivation is related to improved energy levels and drive, which in turn leads to an increased performance at work and greater recognition of the person's efforts by their superiors and colleagues. The better the work performance, the higher the chance for a successful career, in general.
- **Positive Working Environment:** A motivated person usually has a positive attitude, which can have a very lasting beneficial effect and help for the development of a more supportive and satisfactory work environment for all people that work in the organization.
- **Providing inspiration:** When a person is very motivated, they can serve as an inspiration to others with their dedication and drive. An individual's motivation can help others immensely and support the development of a positive working environment for everyone.



Motivation at the workplace

According to Nor et al. (2023) motivation can be defined “as encouragement from within a person to do a certain goal”. It drives staff to continue working and fulfil their job tasks and responsibilities well, regardless of the level of difficulty of the task. Improving motivation (incl. for career development) in staff is important for encouraging productivity at work, promoting responsibility and loyalty, reducing stress and burnout and developing a positive working environment and good relationships between co-workers. Nor et al. (2023) also state that high levels of motivation can improve work discipline since sufficiently motivated staff are more productive, creative, and innovative. This in turn creates job satisfaction which is for the benefit of the whole organization and supports its sustainability. Therefore, it can be concluded that motivation for career development can be a powerful tool to enhance the work performance of staff.

Based on the above information, it becomes clear that research on understanding motivation for career development is very important, in particular studies that focus on the factors that influence the development of this type of motivation. In recent years, several studies have focused on the factors that encourage the formation of motivation for career development (also called work motivation).

The first important factor was leadership, and research has found that it has a positive impact on work motivation. Thus, leadership plays an important role in promoting motivation for career development because it helps direct the organization in achieving goals/objectives (Nor et al., 2023).

The second factor that is important for motivation for career development is the working environment. This factor was examined in the study of Muryani et al. (2019) and many others and it has been found that it had a big influence on the motivation of staff. Essentially, this shows that creating a positive work environment for all encourages improvement in work performance of staff.

The third factor that was considered in recent research on work motivation was the development of a training program for staff. For example, the study of Chahar et al. (2021) found that HR Development Programs help to improve staff motivation (including at the organization level and



the tertiary level). Overall, the results indicate that training has a positive impact on work motivation and staff performance. In addition to this, work motivation can serve as a mediator between training and staff performance.

Another (fourth) factor in motivation for career development was examined in the study by Seqhobane & Koko (2021) which focused on the characteristics of the work tasks, rewards for staff work performance, and career paths. These all serve as factors that influence work motivation (motivation for career development). Some of the rewards for staff performance can be in the form of bonuses, distance work, or paid workshop for improving career prospects as well as appreciation or feedback for successful performance which can promote work motivation (Nor et al., 2023). For rewards to be effective in stimulating motivation, the organization also needs to promote free communication and innovation among employees.

Other factors that have an impact on motivation for career development are also examined in the study of Muryani et al. (2019) where it was found that commitment has a direct and indirect impact on staff motivation. According to Muryani et al. (2019), commitment can be defined as a form of attachment between staff and the organization in question, and it indirectly reflects the employees' involvement in the organization. Commitment can also have a significant positive influence not only on work motivation but on job satisfaction as well.

Based on the existing research focusing on the important factors that have a significant influence of motivation for career development, it can be concluded that managers/superiors need to find more effective ways to motivate their staff through a variety of means such as providing better work environment and conditions, more clear job characteristics, adequate salary and bonuses, and welfare policies.

Tools linked with motivation for career development:

- **Personality assessment tools (according to Arinze, 2023; Gardiner, 2023; Aiken, 1999)**

It is widely known that every individual is unique and have their strengths, weaknesses, desires, aspirations and reasons for doing their job. In addition to this, each person has their own unique work style and work environment that they prefer and thrive in. However, more often than not, these important details are not known, or not taken full advantage of. Personality assessment tools can help discover each employee's strengths, motivations, and potential in order to improve staff productivity and the organizations 'progress in general. The tools can help an employee become a valuable member of staff and maximize the use of their talents and competencies.

The most popular personality assessment tools according to Gardiner (2023) are:

- **The Hogan personality inventory (HPI)** –a self-report personality assessment created by Hogan & Hogan (2002) based on the California Personality Inventory (Gough, 1975) and the five-factor model of personality according to which there are 5 key dimensions of personality, namely: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Digman, 1990). The HPI can be used by organizations to support the recruitment process and the development of employees.
- **DISC test** – a personality assessment test created by Merenda and Clarke (1965) that can be used within organizations and corporations. The main advantage of this tool is that it is simpler and easier to complete for employees (it takes only 10 minutes to fulfil). It consists of 24 questions that assess behaviors such as dominance, inducement, submission and compliance.
- **NEO-PI-R** - developed by Costa & McCrae (2008), this test is popular for personality assessment and is based on the trait theory of personality (Allport & Odbert, 1936). It is a highly reliable and evidence-based tool that supports the evaluation of an employee's strengths, weaknesses and talents. The NEO-PI-R can

be used by organizations to find suitable candidates for a job position. It is also based on the big five factors of personality (just like the HPI) but the main disadvantage is that it is too long (240 questions that take 30-40 minutes to answer).

- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)** – The MBTI is one of the most popular and widely used personality assessment tools (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). It was developed in the 40s and consists of 93 questions which makes it a very detailed test. Its goal is to assess in a person the 4 personality dimensions: Introversion/extraversion; Sensing/intuition; Thinking/feeling and Judging/perceiving. Based on the results the individual can be categorized into 1 of 16 possible combination. The MBTI remains one of employers' favorite assessment tools to this day.

- **Online learning platforms**

To improve motivation for career development among staff, a variety of courses developed by experts and distinguished institutions can be applied to employees. This method for enhancing motivation has many advantages such as: convenience, access to relevant learning content and materials to increase knowledge and skills on particular subjects, and many more. It should be mentioned that these learning tools vary in cost, diversity, quality and content formats (Naushad, 2023). The right choice of a learning platform and/or course depends on specific learning needs and criteria set by the organization. Online learning platforms include LinkedIn Learning, Coursera and other.

- **Mentoring and coaching platforms**

Mentoring and coaching platforms can also be used as a valuable tool to promote career development and motivation. They use a hands-on approach for the development of knowledge and skills and can also provide support and encouragement to employees (Arinze, 2023). There is also an option for informal coaching within the organization where a new employee can be mentored by a senior one so that they can develop the relevant competencies (technical, soft, etc.). Examples of mentoring and coaching platforms include Qooper, CoachHub, and other.



- **Seminars, workshops, and conferences**

Another option to improve motivation for career development is the organization of workplace seminars, workshops and conferences and inviting specialists to teach specific topics to employees who can benefit from this and give them the opportunity to explore different career paths (Arinze, 2023). Moreover, the interactions and networking opportunities during these events can help staff with the improvement of soft and hard skills needed for the job.

3. Motivation for international collaboration and cooperation (in projects)

According to Atlassian (2023), international project collaboration and cooperation relies on 3 main factors: effective communication, consistency in the processes, and using collaboration tools. As work styles and technologies continue to evolve, methods to motivate individuals and organizations for beneficial international cooperation need to evolve as well.

Collaboration and cooperation as phenomena both refer to “people working together to achieve a goal” (Skortcheva, 2023). In the field of project management, when partners collaborate and cooperate effectively, they are more likely to achieve the project objectives, overcome different challenges that may occur during the project period and this in turn will create a more positive working environment. However, the main difference is that “collaboration addresses situations in which people work together on a shared goal, while cooperation involves working with others to help them achieve their individual goals” (Skortcheva, 2023). Nevertheless, both have contributed to the society and modern world that we are living in today.

Partners need to be highly motivated for international project collaboration and cooperation because they can bring the following benefits (Atlassian, 2023):

- **Improved communication** – collaboration promotes the open and clear communication between partners which removes misunderstandings and guarantees that every team member is working towards the project objectives.



- **Improved efficiency** – with higher motivation for collaboration and cooperation, the team works more effectively and efficiently, individual and group tasks are completed quicker, and all can share their knowledge and skills in order to find the best solution to different issues that may occur during the project period. This helps the team members identify areas for improvement and develop effective strategies to increase productivity. Depending on the project, multiple people can work together on more than one task/activity, which in turn, improves efficiency.
- **Improved decision-making** - higher motivation for international collaboration and cooperation supports the sharing of diverse ideas and perspectives between partners, which leads to better decision-making and solving of possible problems. Team members can utilize their shared knowledge and skills to develop creative solutions to those issues.
- **Increased creative thinking** – collaboration and cooperation often leads to finding new creative ideas because each team member shares their experience, knowledge and skills. This has an overall positive influence on morale which leads to improved work performance and results.
- **Increased engagement** - when the partners are motivated to collaborate and cooperate, they work together towards the project objectives and are more engaged with their work. This contributes to the purpose of the project itself and makes team members more accountable and striving for success, whilst identifying potential problems and their solutions.
- **Improved quality** - high motivation for international collaboration and cooperation ensures better quality control of activities, because team members review each other's work and provide valuable feedback and recommendations. This process guarantees that projects are completed on time according to the highest standards, and that they provide the best possible outcomes.

All in all, high motivation for international project collaboration and cooperation is very important for ensuring the successful work of all partners and the effective achievement of goals (Atlassian, 2023).

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How to motivate and inspire people for international collaboration and cooperation, according to Nolte, expert for LinkedIn (2023):

- **Establish clear and respectful communication** (this is important for the first communication before the project starts or when it's in its writing stage, during the project period and even after its end);

Communication is the basis of successful international collaboration and cooperation. All partners need to share their expectations, feedback, recommendations, impressions, opinions, their progress, challenges that they face, relevant ideas, and try to communicate all this information in a respectful manner to others (Nolte, 2023). In order to support this process, team members can use appropriate communication channels and tools, such as e-mail correspondence, chats, video calls/meetings through online platforms such as Zoom, MS Teams, etc., or other project management tools. This will help keep all parties informed and will promote their engagement. Clear language should be used to avoid misunderstandings. All partners should listen carefully to others and acknowledge their contributions. The team should also have a clear common purpose and vision to foster a positive working environment.

- **Set SMART goals and acknowledge achievements/progress made**

As mentioned above, motivation for collaboration and cooperation becomes higher when everyone has a clear shared vision of their common goal/s. That is why, SMART goals need to be set – goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (Nolte, 2023). They need to be communicated to all partners in a clear manner. It will also be more beneficial if bigger objectives are divided into smaller ones, in order to assign responsibilities between the parties accordingly. To sustain motivation for cooperation and collaboration, it is vital to track and monitor the progress, and if any issues occur, plans need to be adjusted. Team members will become even more motivated if their achievements, contributions and progress (be it big or small) are acknowledged, praised, recognized and celebrated. This will also improve their self-esteem, morale and effectiveness.



- **Promote creativity and innovation**

According to Nolte (2023), international collaboration and cooperation gives opportunity to all team members to be creative and innovative. All partners need to be encouraged to share their ideas, opinions, recommendations, feedback and suggestions to create a positive working environment that is free of criticism and judgment. Of course, constructive criticism is allowed, and everyone needs to be open to different perspectives to learn and improve. Team members need to be encouraged to think outside the box and brainstorm creative solutions to issues.

Remember, that each team member has a different background, life experience and expertise which can contribute to better collaboration. The important thing is for everyone to feel valued and that their contribution is being acknowledged.

- **Create a trusting environment and mutual understanding**

To improve motivation for international collaboration and cooperation, it is important to establish trust and rapport between team members. This includes encouraging qualities such as reliability, competence and accountability, as well as the building of a positive relationship within the partnership based on mutual respect and understanding. Nolte (2023) also states that this can be achieved through transparency and honesty, showing interest toward each team member, asking and providing help and support when it is necessary, respecting diversity and differences, avoiding conflict, and resolving any issues (if they occur) in a respectful manner. Following these steps will ensure the higher motivation of the team to collaborate and cooperate.

Mistakes also need to be acknowledged and accountability needs to be taken when necessary. This will also promote a trusting environment of mutual understanding between partners.

- **Enjoy the process**

According to Nolte (2023), collaboration/cooperation can be an enjoyable experience for all team members. Motivation within the partnership can be improved through humor, team-building activities, games and/or social events to build and maintain positive relationship. During these activities and events, members can share more about their interests, hobbies, talents and others, and can have the opportunity to learn more about others. It is very important also to express gratitude for the hard work and efforts, to show appreciation and praise the contributions of all



team members regularly. Finally, having qualities such as optimism, a mindset of growth and a sense of humor can additionally motivate and inspire partners to collaborate and achieve the set goals/objectives.

All in all, motivation for international collaboration and cooperation is very important because both can benefit the partners that are working together towards shared or individual goal/s. If the team plans accordingly and follows the abovementioned steps, each member will have the potential for growth and professional development, and the project will be successful with all the objectives achieved completely and in a timely manner.



V. ISO 45003:2021 - Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks

1. What is ISO 45003:2021 and what does it include

“ISO 45003:2021 - Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks” is a document that includes important guidelines for managing the protection of the occupational health and safety of staff and controlling the psychosocial risk associated with hazardous / harmful activities at work (ISO, 2021). It supports employees by setting various standards and assigning functions to management in order to guarantee the health and maximum safety of staff in organizations.

ISO 45003:2021 includes and describes in detail how to deal with different work process aspects with the aim to eliminate, decrease and limit occupational stress of employees. This is crucial as occupational stress, defined by the WHO (2020) as: “the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope”, can be very harmful for the mental health and wellbeing of employees.

In addition to this, the ISO 45003:2021 document provides guidelines for the protection of the health and safety of different types of workers - regular employees, workers of outside contractors, contractors, self-employed, workers with different kinds of disabilities and other stakeholders such as visitors, members of the public, and other. (ISO 45003:2021, 2021).

According to the International Labor Organization – ILO (2023), effective management of occupational safety and health benefits many – the employees themselves, the organizations and the whole society. This is especially important in periods of economic uncertainty because organizations may find it difficult to maintain the productivity levels of their employees who may be working under pressure and tight deadlines, and may be much more likely to make mistakes which in turn can sometimes lead to accidents.

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It is never a good idea for the organizations to dismiss occupational safety and health (OSH) as a minor issue or “administrative burden (ILO, 2023). It remains important to raise awareness of the psychosocial and other types of risks at work and how to deal with them productively.

According to the EU strategic framework on health and safety at work (2021-2027), a multi-stage process including work environment changes needs to be implemented in order to successfully overcome the risks to psychosocial well-being of employees. It is well-known that the European Commission is funding various projects that focus on these particular topics and challenges. They have the objective to create and implement different intervention in order to promote better mental health and well-being at work.

Tackling these issues in a timely manner is crucial because WHO (2020; 2022) states that “Stress in the workplace occurs when the demands on the worker exceed their ability to cope.” It is evident that during the COVID-19 pandemic many workers had increased occupational stress levels due to the increase in work demands which prevented them to cope more effectively with challenges. This period and not only has proved that stress can be one of the most severe consequences of an adverse psychosocial work environment, and various factors and risks play a complex role in this. The main issue is that employees who are exposed to prolonged / chronic stress at work are more likely to suffer from serious mental and physical health conditions, which can have detrimental effects on their overall well-being and quality of life.

To address the issues stated above, the ISO 45003:2021 document focuses in great detail on various work aspects, including on the psychosocial risks that are associated with adverse psychological, physical and social consequences that may be caused by ineffective management and poor social conditions at work. According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2023), these risks include but are not limited to:

- working under increased demands and/or not having enough time to fulfill work tasks and responsibilities;
- unclear role of the employee and conflicting demands;



- mismatch between work demands and employee skills/competence - it is important to mention that under-utilization of employee skills can cause occupational stress just as much as overworking;
- insufficient involvement in decision-making that may have a direct impact on the employee and lack of influence over the work process;
- working alone, especially when dealing with clients, and/or being subjected to physical and/or sexual violence, verbal aggression (insults), unwanted sexual attention or threats of actual physical and/or sexual violence;
- insufficient support from management and co-workers and poor relationships at the workplace;
- experiencing psychological and/or sexual harassment at work, incl. victimisation, humiliating, or threatening behaviour by managers or co-workers;
- unfair distribution of work, bonuses, promotions or career opportunities that may affect the professional development of the employee;
- poor / ineffective communication, poor organisational change and insecurity at work;
- experiencing challenges in balancing work and family life (achieving work-life balance).

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2023) highlights the importance not to confuse the mentioned psychosocial risks with a healthy supportive work environment, that may be challenging at times but stimulates the personal and professional development of employees and promotes their productivity and performance in accordance with their skills, knowledge and competencies.

Of course, the risks and factors that influence the mental health and well-being of employees are various and not limited only to the workplace, but WHO (2022) suggests that the work environment makes a significant contribution. A good psychosocial environment at work can promote staff's mental health and well-being by creating a sense of social inclusion, identity and status, along with providing opportunities for growth and professional development, which in turn lead to greater self-esteem and efficacy in employees. In contrast, a poor psychosocial environment can have significant negative influence on employee's mental health and well-being.

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In the literature and according to ISO 45003:2021 (2021), there are different strategies to prevent a poor psychosocial environment at work, and in particular occupational stress. These strategies are:

- Internal strategies – the employee tries to prevent or deal with occupational stress by using, changing, mobilizing their own attitudes, skills, competencies, knowledge, personality traits and other available resources;
- External strategies – the employee tries to prevent or deal with occupational stress by using resources of the environment such as managers, mentors, organizational culture and policies, co-workers, relatives, friends, psychologists, therapists and other.

It is important that ISO 45003:2021 focuses on these strategies for preventing and managing occupational stress because according to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2023) poorly managed psychosocial risks can impact negatively the employee on a number of levels.

At the personal level, the negative influence of poorly managed psychosocial risks includes: occupational stress, decreased mental health and well-being, burnout / exhaustion, poor concentration, making more mistakes than before, family and relationship issues, drug and alcohol use, and decreased physical health, particularly an increase in cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders.

At the organisational level, the negative consequences of poorly managed psychosocial risks and occupational stress include: poor organization performance, increased absenteeism, presenteeism (which is when employees go to work when they are sick and unable to do their tasks in an effective manner), and increased accident and injury rates. Stress at work can also contribute to increased levels of early retirement, which can cost the business and society.

In conclusion, ISO 45003:2021 “ISO 45003:2021 - Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks” is an occupational and safety management standard that has the purpose to improve health (including



mental and physical health) and safety at work (Blisspot / LinkedIn, 2023). The document addresses the important gap that was missing from previous health and safety standards, namely mental health. It is evident, that ISO 45003:2021 can contribute to creating a management system that deals effectively (prevents or manages) with various psychosocial risks. By doing so, the implementation of the standard can ensure a more safe, healthy and positive working environment for all employees.

2. How to create support groups for mental health (for managing psychological risks in accordance with ISO 45003:2021)

According to ISO 45003:2021 (2021) one of the ways for effectively managing psychological and psychosocial risks (as described in the last section), is to create a support group for improving the mental health of staff/employees working in the organization.

Hoy (2023), an expert for HelpGuide.org, states that “A support group is a gathering of people facing common issues to share what’s troubling them”. This can, of course, also apply to employees who are working together at an organization. Through the sharing of experiences, individuals can provide and receive support and encouragement from the other members of the support group.

The support group can become a form of “safe space” where members can receive practical and beneficial information. They will feel encouraged and will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge on how to tackle various issues through the experiences that are shared within the group (Hoy, 2023). This, in turn, will make members feel that they are not alone and others may face similar problems.

Benefits of support groups (according to Hoy, 2023, expert for HelpGuide.org)

Apart from the benefits of a healthier and happier staff, managing psychological risks (incl. through support groups) influences every aspect of the organization. This can improve productivity, profitability and the overall work performance of employees.



Here is some important advice and steps on **how to create a support group** from Paine et al. (1990):

- **Acquiring more effective coping strategies.** The members of the support group who face various challenges will have the opportunity to learn new and better coping strategies. They will increase their coping skills thanks to other members of the group and their valuable experience. They will also have the chance to learn useful tips on different topics such as meditation, journaling, setting boundaries and other things that may be of help for their personal and professional development.
- **Growth via shared experiences.** The support group will give the opportunity for members to share their experiences and emotions. This will reduce feelings of isolation and emotional burden because others will share their personal stories through which valuable insight can be gained on how to tackle similar situations.
- **Focusing on self-care.** Members of support groups can provide and receive innovative solutions to various issues (for example, at work) and will get valuable information on self-care, stress management, dealing with burnout and fatigue and improving their overall mental and physical well-being which is an important factor in their personal and professional development.

Competence, communication and awareness are all key elements in the support group.

According to Blissspot (2023) from LinkedIn, the ways of managing psychological risks and improving the workplace environment (incl. through support groups) include:

- **Developing competence** to identify psychosocial hazards and to manage risks including completion of risk assessments and implementation of risk control measures.
- **Increased organizational resilience:** improved risk management and support network contribute to the adaptation of workplaces to stressful and challenging situations or changes while maintaining the mental health and wellbeing of employees/staff.



- **Improved awareness:** better monitoring and training as well as access to support groups can aid staff/employees in understanding their mental health, thus preventing the risk of professional burnout.
- **Decreased absenteeism:** if staff/employees struggle with their mental health, they might take time off work. Having effective procedures to protect employees/staff from psychosocial risks can help decrease absenteeism levels and speed up mental health recovery. This can also be achieved through access to suitable support groups.
- **Increased productivity:** stress and other mental health risks can decrease the productivity of employees. Staff are more productive and experience improved well-being when they are adequately supported. Increased work performance, reliability and loyalty can only be expected from employees that are happy and healthy.
- **Supporting diversity:** by having active processes and groups to support and protect all employees with whatever they need, organizations can ensure the diversity of staff.
- **Recruitment and retention:** a positive working environment with supportive management can attract talented employees, improve staff retention, and decrease recruitment costs.
- **Legal compliance:** employers are obligated by law to protect their employees, including through conducting risk assessments to ensure their safety. It is important that this requirement is met within the organization to guarantee the wellbeing of staff.
- **Improved communication:** ISO 45003:2021 (2021) provides a framework for improved communication between employees and management, supporting and encouraging staff to work together and decrease psychosocial risks.
- **Better and safer policies for working remotely and out-of-hours work:** employers can use ISO 45003:2021 (2021) to create systems that protect employees who don't work in the organization's buildings or who work out-of-hours.
- **Improved confidentiality:** by having an established confidentiality process, ISO 45003:2021 (2021) helps to protect employees from psychosocial risks and maintains compliance with laws and regulations.



- **Think about what you want to achieve**

Make a decision on the purpose of the support group and who do you wish to reach (e.g. target group). To support this process, it might be useful to write a vision and mission statement of the support group.

- **Search for existing national, regional or local groups that the group can be involved with**

It is beneficial to set up the support group under the auspices of a larger organization. This organization can provide resources and assistance and help with the creation of the new support group. Is it also useful if the organization is well-known and recognized in order to improve the credibility of the support group. The already established popularity of the organization, will make it easier for people to gain access to the support group.

- **Decide whether the support group will meet for a specific period or an indefinite period**

There are types of support groups which are long-running, but some are restricted to a specific time period. Support groups with a time-limited format are more suitable for crisis situations, and cannot offer long-term support.

- **Decide on whether the support group will remain open or be closed**

The main difference between both types is that open support groups can be joined by new members at any time (during the existence of the support group), whilst closed ones do not offer this opportunity. On the contrary, in closed groups, individuals are only allowed to join at specific times (for example, the first 2-3 weeks) or under specific circumstances (for example, if they are women). Some organizations offer both types of meetings – open meetings which are available to anyone, and closed meetings with restricted number of participants.



It might be beneficial to create a closed support group, if the plan is to work on a very specific issue. Nevertheless, open support groups remain the best option.

- **Decide on a time and place for the support group meetings**

This decision will make it possible for people to plan ahead and schedule their time. Take into account that mid-afternoon on weekdays may not be suitable for individuals who are currently working. Usually, the best time for support group meetings are early evenings on weekdays.

In addition to this, selecting a good location for the meetings is important. If you work with an organization that has a meeting space, the support group can meet there, although this is not always the best place. Another public building may be more suitable for the needs of the group. Moreover, depending on the group type, members may wish to be discreet, and be less likely to attend if a popular place is chosen. Also, the location should be easily accessible to anyone (including persons who use wheelchairs, etc.) who might come, and the building should be relatively easy to find and with adequate parking.

The location should make people feel comfortable enough to talk about their issues and be able to offer each other the needed support. Apart from being comfortable, the location also needs to fit the type of group. For example, groups held in public places are more accessible to new members. Finally, when the location is selected, room reservations and other arrangements need to be made.

- **Choose a support group leader/ facilitator**

Selecting the right leader of the support group is very important. The group leader / or facilitator is responsible for opening and closing the meetings, facilitating the discussion, offering help and support to members, listening to their concerns and encouraging sharing, and dealing with any issues that may arise during the meeting. The group leader/ facilitator must possess the following qualities:

- **Flexible schedule:** The group leader/facilitator should have enough time to perform the required tasks and be there for the meetings.



- **Energetic:** The group leader/facilitator should have a positive and optimistic attitude and should be energetic in order to keep the group going.
- **Experience and ability:** It is preferable that the group leader/facilitator has experience in facilitating support groups. He/she should be responsible, eloquent, communicative, charismatic, fair, organized, and able to work well with other people.
- **Support:** The facilitator should have access to needed resources to lead the group (e.g. a phone, a car, and other), so that group members can rely on them.
- **Desire to run the group:** In general, the group leader/ facilitator should be interested in the topic of the support group and be committed to helping other people.

- **Make a decision on the remaining details**

Think about what you want this group achieve (return to step 1). This can help you make a decision on the remaining detail such as: how often should the group meet (most support groups meet every week or two); how long should the meetings last (most support group meetings last 1-2 hours but the duration also depends on the number of people attending); are food and drinks going to be served (this may encourage socializing among members but depends on the available budget) and other.

- **Recruit support group members**

Think about how big you want the support group to be before beginning the recruiting process. In general, it's better to have a large enough group even when some members are absent, but small enough so that participants can feel comfortable. 5-15 people is a good number for a support group, anything larger than that is hard to manage and may feel impersonal.

There are numerous ways to spread the word about the support group but most of them use a combination of all, such as:

- **Using referrals:** this includes networking with other groups and professional in the area, and encouraging them to spread the word. Other methods are sending letters, brochures or



flyers to the offices of local organizations with a similar goal. In addition to this, presentations can be done to some agencies and organizations.

- **Using the media:** this includes posting on social media/networks (Facebook, Instagram and other) about the support group to reach more potential members that might be interested in the topic.
- **Press releases:** this includes sending information about the support group to the local press so that they might do a story on the group that generates interest in potential members.
- **Advertising:** this can be done through putting ads in the local newspaper, and/or publications or newsletters put out by agencies in order to reach more potential members.
- **Public service announcements:** These can be aired on local radio or television stations so that they reach a larger amount of people.
- **Using personal invitations and word-of-mouth:** this is the most informal method of recruiting members for support groups; however, it is also the most effective. Word-of-mouth happens when one individual tells another individual about a group, and then that person tells another, etc. The strategy is to tell everyone you can about the support group, and encourage them to tell others. When the group begins meeting, ask members to tell others about the support group.

Finally, once the wanted number of members is reached, contact them and let them know the date and time of the first meeting (Paine et al., 2023). Do this in advance (for example, 2 weeks before the meeting) so they adjust their schedule, and follow up with a reminder a few days before the meeting.

Using the advice and steps provided above, a support group can be created in the most effective manner possible. This group can provide improve the mental health and wellbeing of members and can help manage psychological risks in accordance with ISO 45003:2021.



3. ISO 45003:2021 Resources for psychosocial safety and health

Although the full access to the standard ISO 45003:2021 on the official website <https://www.iso.org/standard/64283.html> requires payment, there are numerous resources related to the standard and psychosocial safety and health that can be found easily on the Internet and used in order to improve the mental health of employees/staff in organizations. The progress of the ISO 45003 standard can also be tracked on the abovementioned ISO homepage. The page includes relevant information and where it is in the standards development process. A free sample of the Standard can also be accessed and read at <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/en/#iso:std:iso:45003:ed-1:v1:en> for more information.

Other valuable ISO 45003:2023 Resources for psychosocial safety and health can be found in the “Guide to ISO 45003. An Overview of the Standard and More Total Worker Health® Resources” published by the American Society of Safety Professionals. The Guide was developed with the purpose to provide an overview of ISO 45003 and additional resources for people interested in learning more about worker health and this ISO standard. The guidance document aims raising awareness of the importance of worker health, safety and how safety professionals can incorporate psychological risk analysis into their occupational safety and health management systems (American Society of Safety Professionals, 2023).

Ken Clayman, a member of the U.S. Technical Advisory Group to TC 283, cited in the Guide, suggests that organizations should evaluate the potential stressors in the workplace that could cause psychosocial risks for employees/staff. According to him, the intent of the document is to aid organizations and safety professionals in identifying and tackling such psychosocial hazards and risks in the workplace. This can enable organizations to prevent work-related injury and ill health of their employees/ staff and to promote their better mental health and well-being. The process of evaluating the potential stressors can be applicable to organizations of all sizes and sectors to support the health and safety in the workplace.



Valuable resources mentioned in the “Guide to ISO 45003. An Overview of the Standard and More Total Worker Health® Resources” published by the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP, 2023):

- “Shaping the Future of Safety Management Systems” (article by American Society of Safety Professionals, 2019) - <https://www.assp.org/news-and-articles/shaping-the-future-of-safety-management-systems>

This article focuses on the vision of the ISO/TC 283 Committee who is responsible for the development and improvement of the ISO standard.

- Psychosocial Safety & Health (podcast)

In this podcast, Ken Clayman provides information on ISO 45003:2021, on the stresses occurring in the workplace, communication between employees and different psychosocial hazards and risks that can cause illness, injury or a decrease in productivity in staff.

- Resources at <https://www.assp.org/resources/total-worker-health>, including Total Worker Health® (TWH) policies, programs, and practices that aim to protect from work-related safety and health hazards and promote staff mental health and well-being.

The TWH approach is holistic and prioritizes a hazard-free work environment for all employees. By applying the TWH principles, the organization can move towards a risk-based approach to safety management (ASSP, 2023b). The TWH principles focus not only on the physical work environment, but also on the psychosocial work environment and its impact on employees. The resources provided on the website provide information on how to use a TWH approach to prevent injuries and illnesses in the organization and improve staff mental health and well-being.

The website also includes Total Worker Health® Tools which are a range of practical, evidence-based tools focusing on incorporating TWH into the safety management system of the organization. There are different categories – basic, intermediate and advance, to help users identify which tools would be most useful and beneficial for them in accordance with their knowledge and needs. Basic tools focus on the understanding of the TWH approach, intermediate – on using the TWH framework in the workplace, and the advanced – on toolkits, models and evaluation strategies. One can also find featured articles (e.g. “10 Free Resources to Help You



Better Manage Stress”, “How to Talk to Every Generation About Psychological Safety”, “Why Deb Roy Says Total Worker Health® is the Way of the Future”, “What Is Mindfulness and How Can It Improve Safety?” and other), podcast and webinar on the website.

- Article: ISO 45003 and the need for psychological health and safety- <https://www.hse-network.com/iso-45003-and-the-need-for-psychological-health-and-safety/>

In this article, Field (2021) outlines how the COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the need for ISO 45003 and a human-centred approach. According to her, the pandemic has increased the awareness about psychological health and well-being at the workplace in a way that has not happened before. In the article, she also provides resources for a better understanding of the ISO standard creation process and the current management standards on stress.

- Article by IOSH Magazine: Delving deeper into ISO 45003 - <https://www.ioshmagazine.com/2021/01/06/delving-deeper-iso-45003>

The article describes the ISO standard, its timeline, breadth of scope, and how to put it into practice in order to make good mental health and wellbeing of employees part of the organization’s culture (Crush, 2021).

- IOSH webinar: ISO 45003 – The changing landscape for managing psychosocial risks - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDaBK4ttyJg&ab_channel=IOSHchannel

This webinar is presented by IOSH, a liaison body that has been carrying out in the ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety working group (ISO/TC 283 Occupational safety and health management systems). According to the video, ISO 45003:2021 is the first international standard that focuses on psychological health and safety/management of psychosocial risks in the workplace. The speakers include: Dr. Ivan Williams Jimenez, Policy Development Manager at IOSH, Dr. Carlo Caponecchia, Senior Lecturer and Associate Dean Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Faculty of Science University of New South Wales (UNSW), Dr Priya Ragunath, Head of Occupational Health and Environment Sector, Senior Principal Assistant Director Occupational Health Unit, Ministry of Health, Malaysia, Dr Aditya Jain, Associate Professor in Human Resource



Management, Nottingham University Business School and Sapna Mahajan, Director, Prevention and Promotion Initiatives, Workplace Mental Health, Mental Health Commission of Canada.

All these materials and resources would be of interest for people who want to learn more about the ISO 45003:2021 Standard and how to prevent/manage psychosocial risks at the workplace to ensure the psychosocial safety, better mental health and wellbeing of employees.



VI. Training program to increase the capacity of staff

1. Improving personal development (Activities for personal motivation, potential development, addressing deficits and needs)

The first aspect of the Training program to increase the capacity of staff (including in educational organizations) is focused on how to improve the personal development of staff as regards personality-motivational and potential development and by addressing deficits and needs. Here are some important sources which can be used to achieve this:

- **Online Resources and Websites for Training and Exercise:** There are websites that provide information and resources on games and exercises aimed at personal development and motivation. For example, TrainingCourseMaterial.com or TrainersWarehouse.com offer games and exercises that can be used for training and education.
- **Professional Trainings and Seminars:** Participation in professional trainings and seminars on personal development and motivation can offer comprehensive experience and resources for various games and exercises.
- **Online Training Platforms and Courses:** Platforms such as Udemy, Coursera or LinkedIn Learning offer online courses on personal development and motivation, which may include practical exercises and activities.
- **Advice from Professional Trainers or Psychologists:** Consulting professionals in the field of personal development and motivation can provide valuable guidance in selecting appropriate games and exercises to meet the specific needs of the group or individual.

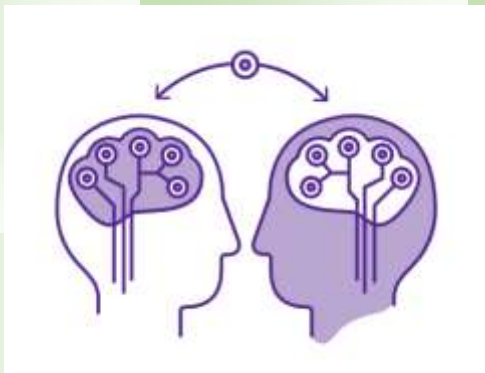
Here is a list of activities that can be implemented during the Training for staff (incl. in educational organizations) to foster personal development, motivation and potential development, addressing deficits and needs.

Activity 1: Active Listening (by Hyper Island)

This exercise helps staff to reflect on a specific question and brainstorm their own solutions by applying the principles of active listening and peer coaching. The activity can also be done as a group exercise in the organizations. Participants divide into groups of three people and take turns being three roles: “the subject”, the listener, and the observer.

Objective:

To help participants reflect on a specific question and brainstorm their own solutions using the principles of active listening and peer coaching (very important principles for fostering personal development of staff).



Picture 1, Source: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/active-listening-yrtil3>

Needed materials: Flipchart and markers.

Instructions:

Step 1:

Do a brief introduction to the principle of active listening and its role in fostering personal development in staff. Provide an explanation that often, when people reflect, they focus on a variety of individuals and questions all at once, which has an impact on attention and focus. Often when a person listens to another, they do so in a discussion-oriented way, thinking about “what will I say next”, rather than actually carefully listening with full presence, attention and focus. An effective way to explore a specific question or an issue is to use the principle of active listening with focus on one person at a time.



Optional: the participants can make a list together with the group of “What makes good active listening?”. The facilitator should invite all to offer their ideas and write them on the flipchart with a marker.

Step 2:

Using the flipchart, present the three roles that individuals will take on during the activity:

- The “subject”:

The subject’s main role is to explore the specific question or issue from their own perspective. The participant who is in this role should bear in mind that they must allow the focus to be on them, and let the reflection flow naturally, being guided by the active listener.

- The active listener:

The active listener’s main role is to listen fully present and focused. To listen with their whole body, to be curious, to carefully observe, paraphrase what they hear and guide the subject with open questions. This person should bear in mind the following: they should ask open questions to support the subject’s reflection; they must not provide advice; they should listen with the whole body.

- The observer:

The observer’s main role is to observe the whole process without talking. Moreover, to make observations from an outside perspective, to see and hear things that the listener and subject might not. This person should bear in mind the following: they should stay silent throughout the whole process; they should observe and make notes about what they see and hear; after the subject finishes, the observer should share their observations with the other participants.

Step 3:

Define and set up the specific question or issue. The question or problem is what each subject will explore and reflect upon – the topic does not matter. It can be commonly asked question for the group (for example, “What are the barriers to change in my work and how can overcome them?”) or each subject can set their own question or issue (for example, they can choose a challenge at



work that they are struggling with currently). The facilitator should ensure that all participants understand what is asked of them during the activity.

Step 4:

Organize the participants into groups of three. The facilitator should make it clear that each participant should have each role for a limited amount of time. Groups can be given one hour or more so that each round can last at least 20 minutes. The facilitator can also explain that groups should pay attention to the time and ensure that there are three equal rounds.

Step 5:

When participants finish, debrief the exercise, using questions such as:

- What happened for me during the exercise?
- How did it feel to be the observer?
- How did it feel to be the subject?
- How did it feel to be the active listener?
- What did I learn about myself?
- How can I apply insights from this exercise?

Tips for running this activity online:

This exercise can also be done in an online format by applying the following tips/steps:

- Pick an online whiteboard tool that allows you to use a large, zoomable canvas;
- Use a video conferencing tool where you can assign the participants into breakout rooms (for example, Zoom).
- When briefing the exercise and assigning groups of three to work together, keep all participants in the main video conference room and explain the best practices. Use the online whiteboard to collect opening responses and feedback.
- After this step is completed, turn on breakout rooms so each group can work on their questions and play each of the three roles.
- After breakout conversations are finished, have participants return to the main room where you can debrief the exercise.



N.B. When facilitating the group discussion, it is recommended that participants use non-verbal means to indicate they'd like to talk. Tools such as Zoom's nonverbal feedback options, reaction emojis, or just having people put their hands up can be used. The facilitator can then invite that person to speak.

Used sources:

Hyper Island, Benitha, S., Esmail, A., & Gundi, S. (accessed in January, 2024). Active listening. SessionLab. <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/active-listening-yrti13>

Activity 2: Magazine story

In this exercise, each team has to create an imaginary magazine cover story about a successful project or business achievement. They have to get the right images, create the headlines, quotes, and other part of the magazine story. This is a very effective activity for fostering creativity, inspiring the team to think bigger and raising their overall motivation levels.

Objective:

To help staff visualize future success, to increase motivation levels, improve personal development and encourage them to think big.

Needed materials: Markers, pens and anything else necessary to create the magazine cover.

Instructions:

1. The goal of the activity is simple: to get participants to create a magazine cover story about your department or project (according to your choosing). They don't have to write the fully story, they only have to write the headlines and create images, quotes and sidebars.
2. Participants must divide into teams of 3-6 people. The facilitator can give them the following materials: markers, pens, and anything else they might need to create an imaginary magazine cover.
3. The next step is for participants to create several templates for different elements of the magazine story. This should include: a) magazine cover, b) cover story headline, c) quotes from leaders and team members, d) sidebars about project highlights, and e) images.



4. After the elements are ready, the participants should distribute these templates to each team. The facilitator can ask them to create a magazine story, filling in each template and focusing on the chosen project.

5. The final step is that participants get to choose the best magazine cover and provide their feedback and recommendations.

This creative exercise helps staff think big and visualize their future success by fostering personal development. It can also be used as a powerful motivational tool.

Used sources:

Cohen, E. (accessed in January, 2024). *31 Team Building Activities Your Team Will*

Actually Love. Project Management Software for Marketing | Workamajig.

<https://www.workamajig.com/hubfs/Team-Building-Activities-Checklist.pdf>

Organizational Development & Training, Office of HR | UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO

GRANDE VALLEY. (accessed in January 2024). Employee engagement, Teambuilding &

Motivating Activities - UTRGV.

<https://www.utrgv.edu/human-resources/files/documents/employee-engagement-teambuilding,-motivation-activities.pdf>

Activity 3: The Whole Picture

Objective:

To brainstorm the qualities of a successful team, to consider the individuals contributions to the team and to create a takeaway from the program. To foster motivation levels and personal development.

Needed materials:

Flip-charts, posters, markers.

Instructions:

1. Divide participants into groups of 4-7 participants.
2. The facilitator should provide each group with flip-chart and markers.
3. Each group must create a drawing that depicts the qualities of a successful team, including contributions that are necessary to bring out those qualities. For example, a group could



draw a sun. In the middle of the sun, they could write all the qualities that make up a team (for example, trust, communication and other). On the rays coming out of the sun, they could write team members contributions (those contributions can be being a good listener, helping each other, being reliable and other).

4. After 15 minutes, the groups should present their posters to the whole team. The facilitator should encourage them to share their insights about the traits and characteristics demonstrated throughout the activity and ask them what steps they believe can be taken to incorporate those qualities and characteristics into their everyday work.

This creative exercise helps staff foster personal development skills and improve their motivation levels as well as develops their team building skills.

Used sources:

Scannell, M., & Scannell, E. E. (2010). The big book of team motivating games: Spirit-building, problem-solving, and communication games for every group. McGraw-Hill.

Organizational Development & Training, Office of HR | UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO
GRANDE VALLEY. (accessed in January 2024). Employee engagement, Teambuilding &
Motivating Activities - UTRGV. <https://www.utrgv.edu/human-resources/files/documents/employee-engagement-teambuilding,-motivation-activities.pdf>

Activity 4: Explore your Values (by Hyper Island)



Picture 2, Source: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/explore-your-values>

Explore Your Values is an exercise for staff to explore what their most important values are which in turn can foster personal and potential development and raise motivation levels. It's done in an intuitive and fast way to encourage participants to follow their intuition rather than over-thinking and finding the "correct" values. It is a good activity to use to initiate reflection and dialogue around personal values of staff.

Objectives:

To initiate reflection and dialogue around personal values; stimulate personal development and motivation among staff.

Needed Materials: Post-its, Pens or Markers.

Instructions:

Step 1:

The facilitator must hand out post-its to all participants.

Step 2:

The facilitator asks participants to write down the ten things in their life that they value the most, one on each post-it, in the form of a value. Rather than the name of a specific person, the participants should put down, for example, words such as "friendship," "family" or "honesty" - something they actually value in the relationship with the other person.

Step 3:

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When each participant is ready with their ten post-its, the facilitator asks participants to spread them out in front of them so that they can see them clearly and have a good overview.

Step 4:

The facilitator tells the participants that they have 30 seconds to pick the three post-its that are the least important to them, and throw them away. The facilitator should encourage participants to stick to the time and use their gut feelings/intuition.

Step 5:

The last step is repeated, but this time with only 20 seconds for participants to throw away two more post-its that are least important to them.

Step 6:

Finally, the participants repeat the last step, having 20 seconds to throw away two more post its that are least important to them. They should now have three post-its left with their three most important values.

Step 7:

The facilitator gives the participants 15 minutes to reflect on the exercise individually, then 30 minutes in pairs or groups of three to reflect on the following questions:

- What do I feel about the values I ended up with? Were they expected or did they surprise me?
- How do these values show themselves in my everyday life?
- What actions do I already take to live by them?
- What actions would I like to take to live by them?

N.B. These actions can be connected back to an action plan, using everyday actions to live and work more holistically.

Tips for running this activity online:

This exercise can also be done in an online format by applying the following tips/steps:

- Pick an online whiteboard tool that allows you to use a large, zoomable canvas where all participants can contribute. Give each participant a space on the board to work in.



Alternatively, create a shared online document and have each person create a header with their name to collect their values.

- Use a video conferencing tool where you can assign the participants into breakout rooms (for example, Zoom).
- Start by asking participants to write down ten things in their life they value the most on virtual post-its in the online whiteboard.
- Next, ask each participant to spread out their post-its and give them 30 seconds to pick three post-its that are the least important to them, placing the unused post-its to the side of their working area. If using an online document, have each person strike through their least important values.
- Next, give participants 20 seconds to remove two more values.
- Then, give each participant 20 seconds to remove two final post-its. They will then be left with their three most important values.
- Give participants 15 minutes to reflect individually and then assign them into pairs or groups of three to reflect on the questions in step 7.
- After briefing the above, turn on breakout rooms so each group can work on their tasks.
- After breakout tasks are completed, have participants return to the main room where you can debrief the exercise.

N.B. When facilitating group discussion, it is recommended that participants use non-verbal means to indicate they'd like to talk. Tools like Zoom's nonverbal feedback options, reactions emoji, or just having people put their hands up can be used. The facilitator can then invite that person to speak.

Used sources:

Hyper Island & Svenne, M. (accessed in January, 2024). Explore your values. SessionLab.

<https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/explore-your-values>

Applying the abovementioned exercises of the Training program to staff (including in educational organizations) can help foster their personal development as regards aspects such as motivation, team building, potential development and addressing deficits and needs.

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2. Increasing professional development (Activities related to professional roles, dealing with burnout and rotation, forecasting process)

The second aspect of the Training program to increase the capacity of staff (including in educational organizations) is focused on how to increase the professional development of staff as regards dealing with their professional roles, and issues such as burnout and rotation. This involves providing resources and creating an environment that fosters continuous learning and growth. Here are several strategies and resources to enhance professional development:

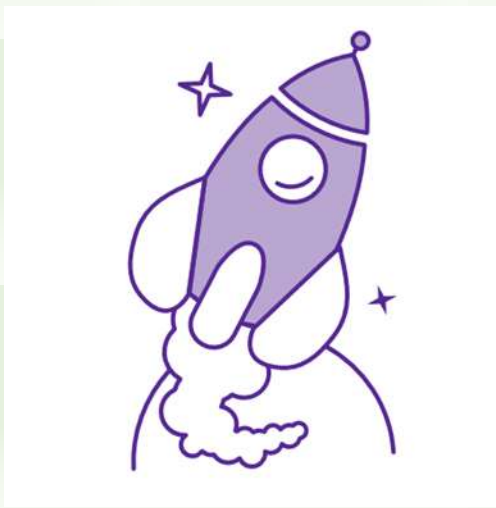
- **Training Programs** (such as this one): the training programs need to be tailored to the organization and employees' specific needs and need to be relevant to the staff's current professional roles.
- **Online Learning Platforms:** online learning platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, Udemy, and Skillshare can be utilized to provide a wide range of courses and resources for professional development of staff.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Establishing mentorship programs where experienced employees can guide and support newer staff members. This fosters knowledge transfer and professional growth.
- **Skill Assessments:** regular skill assessments can be conducted in order to identify areas where employees can improve. This helps in customizing training programs to meet specific needs.
- **Conferences and Workshops:** employees can attend industry conferences, workshops, and seminars. These events provide exposure to the latest trends in their field.
- **Books and Publications:** a library of relevant books and publications can be created to encourage employees to read and share insights with their colleagues.
- **Internal Knowledge Sharing:** to achieve this, the organization needs to foster a culture of knowledge sharing within the organization. Employees should be encouraged to share their expertise through presentations, sessions, or internal newsletters.

- Feedback and Recognition: regular feedback and recognition should be provided to staff for their accomplishments and improvements. Positive reinforcement can motivate employees to continue their professional development efforts.

N.B. Remember to tailor these resources and strategies to the specific needs and goals of the organization and its staff. Regularly assess the effectiveness of your professional development initiatives and make adjustments as needed.

Here is a list of activities that can be implemented during the Training program to foster professional development of staff (incl. in educational organizations), as regards dealing with their professional roles, and issues such as burnout and rotation:

Activity 1: Team Purpose & Culture (by Hyper Island)



Picture 3, Source: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/team-purpose-culture>

This is an important exercise to help staff define their purpose and culture (how they work together to achieve their common work goals). Defining these two aspects can help any employee feel more focused and stimulates their professional development. During the activity, the team members work as individuals and as a group to codify the way they work together. The goal is a visual

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manifestation of both the purpose and culture that can be put up in the work space for everyone to see (Hyper Island, accessed in January, 2024).

Objective:

The activity helps staff define two aspects: their purpose and their culture (how they work together to achieve their common work goals). It also aims to stimulate professional development skills of employees and improve their focus.

Needed Materials:

Screen, Projector, Post-it, Markers, Whiteboard, White A/4.

Instructions:

This activity is divided into two separate parts, purpose and culture. Both are very important to define for any team. This exercise can be used to generate these from scratch or re-energize and re-vitalize an existing purpose and/or culture. The activity can be used to create a common purpose and cultural norms in a work team.

Important definitions:

Purpose is the reason why the work team exists and why it was formed in the first place; why it's needed in the organization.

Culture is how the team works together and gets the job done, it also includes the values, norms and behaviours that are expected from the work team.

Instructions:

Step 1:

The facilitator should start the activity by asking the team members to reflect on the following questions:

- What is our job as a team?
- What's our goal? How do we know when we've done our job?
- What benefit are we bringing to the organization and the world?

The facilitator then asks them to share general thoughts in a check-in.

Step 2:



This step uses the wisdom of the crowd to develop an idea of how the team purpose might be defined.

First, the participants share some examples of the organization's purposes. They can be put up on the wall so they are visible to all team members. Here are a few examples:

- Patagonia - Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.
- Amazon - The Earth's most customer-centric company, where customers can find and discover anything they might want to buy online.
- Greenpeace - To ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity.
- Facebook - To give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.
- Google - To organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.

After reviewing the examples, the facilitator asks each person to write their version of the team's purpose.

Step 3:

In this step, the individually written purposes are combined to make one for the whole team. It might be challenging to go from a variety of opinions to a collective one, so this step requires patience and sticking to some time constraints.

During this step, the 20x20 rule for group decision making is applied. The facilitator gives participants no more than 20 minutes to craft a collective team purpose with no more than 20 words. Team members can be encouraged to pay attention to finessing the language, because words are important: words shape worlds.

The facilitator should give all participants in the activity 10-, 5-, and 2-minute warnings before their time is up. Often a group will arrive at a collective purpose before the end of the time. If so, the facilitator can move on to Step 4.



Once the purpose has been crafted, all participants can take a moment to celebrate this achievement.

Step 4:

Now that the collective team purpose is generated, in the next few steps participant will engage in a similar process for culture. Culture is how the team works together. It's often difficult concept to define in words, but it's easy to feel and experience. Culture is expressed in the way that people communicate with each other, the way that work is assigned and completed, etc.

First, participants must share one or more examples of the organization's culture. The Netflix Culture deck can be used as a famous and outstanding example of a clearly defined working culture. All participants can explore and find other examples that inspire them.

Afterwards, the facilitator gives the team post-its and markers and asks them to write down words that represent the best of the team culture - as many as they like, but one per post-it.

After 5-10 minutes, the participants must lay them the post-its in front of them on the table, wall, or floor. Then they have 1 minute to remove half of their post-its. In a few minutes, the facilitator asks them to do the same again but to keep only 3. The remaining 3 are the most important elements of the team culture.

Step 5:

The facilitator asks the team to put up their notes on the wall. The participants can group the words that have a similar meaning or feeling behind them. During this step, the facilitator's job to recognise when the group is off track and to bring them to making a decision.

When the grouping is finished, the facilitator asks if there's anything missing for the team. Did participants get rid of any culture elements that they think should be up? If so, they can put them up there again.

Step 6:

Now the participants have a draft of the team's culture. The next step is to explain each word or statement – define what the behaviors look like when they are being met and when they aren't.

Examples:

TRANSPARENCY



“We do work in the open, using collaborative documents that anyone can access and having conversations in open channels that anyone can join.”

“We are not secretive, we don't talk behind each other's back, and we don't work in isolation.”

The team can either do this as a group, or assign culture statements to each person to write.

Step 7:

Now, that the purpose and culture of the team are articulated, participants can make huge versions of them to ensure they are visible in the team work space. The statements can be revisited again and can be a living document that changes as the whole team changes in the course of professional development.

Notes for the facilitator:

Even if the team is remote the purpose and culture should still be visible in a way that is suitable for the working process.

Tips for running the activity online:

- Pick an online whiteboard tool that allows to use a large, zoomable canvas.
- Set up each topic at a different area of the board, spread them out just like on the walls of a room.
- Invite participants to zoom in and visit each section and add their ideas as sticky notes once you reach that step of the exercise.
- If you're not using an online whiteboard, it is recommended to use a collaboration tool such as Google Docs to collect the information for each step under a separate heading. Invite everyone into the document but be very clear in regards to editing rights.
- Precreate the screen deck and screen share this with participants through video conferencing software. It is also recommended to share this, so participants can go through the deck again during the reflection steps.
- When facilitating group discussion, it is recommended that participants use non-verbal means to indicate they'd like to speak. Tools like Zoom's nonverbal feedback tools, reaction emojis, or just having people put their hands up can be used. The facilitator can then invite that person to talk.



Used sources:

Hyper Island, My, B., Bahadur, S., C, G., Ritchie, S., Sandalis, M., & Quiroga, C. A. Q.
(accessed in January, 2024). Team Purpose & Culture. SessionLab.
<https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/team-purpose-culture>

Activity 2: BACK-TO-BACK DRAWING

This quick, fun exercise can be done outdoors or indoors, although the physical nature of this activity makes it more suitable for outdoor environments. It can be used as an interlude between longer activities (such as the previous one) or at the very start of the training to make participants feel more relaxed.

Objective:

To improve communication skills and stimulate professional development of staff.

Instructions:

1. Visit a stock photography site and print a number of vector shapes on separate sheets of paper. These can be shapes of signs, objects, or even abstract shapes. Examples can include the "Statue of Liberty", "Formula 1 car", etc.
2. The facilitator divides participants into teams of two people each. They need to sit back-to-back.
3. Team Member A gets a pen and a sheet of paper. Team Member B is given one of the printed shapes.
4. The goal of the activity is for the Team Member A to draw the shape using only verbal instructions from Team Member B. B cannot say what the object is; they can only describe its uses or give instructions on how to draw it.
5. The facilitator gives each team 2 minutes to draw the shape.
6. The teams that get the most shapes correct win.

N.B. This activity focuses on developing communication skills of staff - giving and listening to instructions, which is essential for professional development. At the end of each game, they can evaluate what went wrong and what went right while communicating (Cohen, 2024). This is a



great exercise for getting staff more involved, but it can also highlight the flaws in how the team members communicate verbally and provide a space to brainstorm for ways of improvement.

Used sources:

Cohen, E. (accessed in January, 2024). *31 Team Building Activities Your Team Will Actually Love*. Project Management Software for Marketing | Workamajig.
<https://www.workamajig.com/hubfs/Team-Building-Activities-Checklist.pdf>

Activity 3: Coping with stress and burnout (by PositivePsychology.com)

This valuable activity can help staff find new, more adaptive coping mechanisms for reducing or eliminating the sources of stress and burnout in the workplace. The exercise consists of two parts.

Objective:

The goal of this exercise is to help staff identify what situations make them experience elevated stress and burnout at the workplace, and to recognize how they impact them. This is an essential aspect, as employees who struggle with burnout and stress can struggle as regards their professional development.

Instructions:

Part 1 of the activity is focused on the aspect of self-awareness. Participants have to list the physiological and emotional symptoms of stress and burnout that they experience when faced with specific events. Rating their stress levels in each circumstance can help them prioritize those they'd like to focus on in Part 2.

Part 2 invites employees to think of new and healthier ways to reduce or eliminate their stress and burnout levels. The facilitator asks them to identify the elements of those stress and burnout triggers that they can and cannot control, before designing ways to cope with them in the moment. Finally, the responses to Part 2 can be used to brainstorm new ways to cope in the future to ensure a calm working environment which stimulates the professional development of staff.

Part 1: Recognizing Stress

The table provided below can be used by participants to explore and identify situations and events that trigger physical and emotional symptoms of stress and burnout in them.

In the first column, the employees can list some situations that they feel are causing a stress response in them (i.e. act as a trigger). Participants should be encouraged by the facilitator to write any physical and emotional sensations that they experience in the second and third columns.

Finally, they can use the final right-hand column to rate how much stress and burnout they experience from that trigger, where 0% is the lowest and 100% is the highest.

Situation (When I...)	Physical symptoms (I feel...)	Emotional symptoms (I feel...)	Stress / Burnout rating (0-100%)
E.g. Am given a mountain of work on Monday morning.	E.g. Tight shoulders.	E.g. Overwhelmed and exhausted.	60%

Table 1, Source: Sutton, J. (2021). How to prevent burnout in the workplace: 20 strategies. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/burnout-prevention/#strategies>

Part 2: Coping With Stress

Now, participants can use the triggers they identified in Part 1 to develop some coping mechanisms. The facilitator asks them to list the triggers they'd like to work on in the first, left-hand column - an example is given below. In the second column, participants should try to distinguish between what they can and cannot control about the trigger they've listed.

The third column is for listing how they currently cope with the situation that is the reason for stress and burnout at the workplace, and the final column is where they are invited to think of new

ways to cope with the situation. It is advised to consider both practical and emotional mechanisms that can be helpful.

Situation	Control	Current Coping Mechanism	Adaptive Coping Mechanism
When I...	What can I realistically control about this situation? What aspects are beyond my control?	Right now, I cope by...	How might I deal with this situation to decrease or get rid of my stress?
E.g. Am given a mountain of work on Monday morning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I cannot control how much work I am assigned ■ I can control when and how I finish these tasks ■ I can control how much I personally accomplish 	E.g. Working overtime	E.g. I can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Begin by prioritizing tasks ■ Delegate those which are appropriate ■ Divide my personal goals into manageable sub-goals

Table 2, Source: Sutton, J. (2021). How to prevent burnout in the workplace: 20 strategies. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/burnout-prevention/#strategies>

Used source:

Sutton, J. (2021). How to prevent burnout in the workplace: 20 strategies.

PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/burnout-prevention/#strategies>

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Activity 4: THANK-YOU BINGO

Objective:

This is a short final activity which helps participants reflect on their experience during the training and how they and their team have enhanced their skills for professional development, dealing with burnout, rotation, etc.

Instructions:

Each team member signs the box that reflects their appreciation of a specific person or group at work and take time to provide the specifics regarding their appreciation.

Made you laugh	You got to know better	Showed you a different perspective	Surprised you	Is a good communicator
Gave you a hand	Kept an open mind	Is fun to be around	Works well with others	Deserves appreciation
Did something amazing	Provided encouragement	Reliable team player	Made an improvement	Is a great listener
Has positive energy	Took a risk	Inspires you	Has a great attitude	Has good leadership skills
Is creative	Played a different role	Is a good problem solver	Challenged you	Taught you something new

Table 3, Source: Scannell, M., & Scannell, E. E. (2010). *The big book of team motivating games: Spirit-building, problem-solving, and communication games for every group.* McGraw-Hill.

After the exercise, the participants can engage in a short discussion/debrief, show their appreciation and explore the impact of the training on their skills development. The activity is great for improving communication skills, team building and, in this way, it stimulates motivation for professional development as a team and creates a calmer working environment that can prevent stress and burnout in employees.

Used sources:



Scannell, M., & Scannell, E. E. (2010). *The big book of team motivating games: Spirit-building, problem-solving, and communication games for every group.* McGraw-Hill.

Applying the abovementioned exercises of the Training program to staff (including in educational organizations) can help foster the skills for professional development of employees and improve aspects such as preventing and dealing with stress and burnout at the workplace and adapting to the professional role.

3. Career development and inclusion in international networks

According to Whitfield (2022), career development is defined as “the process of learning and utilizing short-term skills to progress toward long-term professional goals”. This process involves the acquiring of role-specific skills, which can be done by taking classes/courses, attending training, networking/participating and inclusion in networks, incl. international ones, mentorship and other. Successful career development requires following two main steps: 1) deciding on a career goal or goals and 2) defining and acquiring the experience, skills and networking opportunities the employee would need to achieve the career goals.

In short, according to Whitfield (2022), career development is a lifelong process that includes reaching different milestones, specific to the career path of the person, and that often requires reflection on the purpose of the work in order to achieve staff career growth. The career path can be seen as a ladder on which the employee hopefully moves up, earns promotions, develops the necessary skills, competencies and experience for the role through careful planning and intention. Whitfield (2022) states that when the process of career development is successful, employees can:

- Make use of their skills and competencies in their specific professional role – they build and utilize certain skills for the workplace. They also know what competencies they would like to learn and develop, and how to actively use them;



- Feel increased motivation levels at work – when career development is successful, employees set realistic expectations at work, achieve their professional goals, and feel improved motivation, sense of accomplishment and enthusiasm at the workplace.
- Achieve their financial goals – when career development is on track, the employee who is more experienced and skillful will generally receive a higher salary and/or get promoted. If they follow a specific career development plan, they become more knowledgeable on what milestones need to be met on the job and how to do this.
- Become more engaged at work – proper career development stimulates growth and employee retention. Staff who are given opportunities for professional development become more loyal to the organization in the long run.
- Become happier – career development and happiness at the workplace are often interrelated. When employees feel successful and that they achieve their professional goals, this often enhances happiness levels at work, improves performance and initiative.

It should be mentioned that an important way to stimulate career development of staff is through their inclusion and participation in international networks. For example, according to Triunfo (2019), there are many advantages for employees in educational organizations (in particular, teachers) to participate in a transnational mobility project (funded under the Erasmus programme+ or other). Such EU projects can provide beneficial networking opportunities at the international level, and promote the gaining of important skills, such as intercultural skills, ICT skills for teachers, entrepreneurship skills, soft skills and many other. Staff can become more open to new experiences, build and maintain contacts that can be valuable in the long-term for their career development.

It is a common misconception among the general public that programs such as the Erasmus+ target only students – the program is also available and provides exciting opportunities for teachers, educators and adults from other professions. There are three key activities across all sectors that have been introduced: mobility of individuals for learning, cooperation for innovation and good practices, and finally policy reforms (Triunfo, 2019).



Promoting career development of staff (incl. in educational organizations) via acquiring key competencies achieved through their participation in international networks and projects, increases the prospects of staff on the labor market, makes them more competitive, and contributes to the improvement of education and training initiatives at the EU level. Other advantages of including staff in international networks and projects include: personal growth, getting out of one's comfort zone, better adaptation in a multicultural context, improving foreign language skills, increased communication and critical thinking competencies, promoting a culture of tolerance, sharing and diversity, etc.

Triunfo (2019) also states that participation in such experiences at the international level are excellent opportunities for teachers, specifically, who “have the opportunity to acquire and implement the knowledge of innovative tools necessary to respond, with competence and professionalism, to the educational, didactic and methodological requirements imposed from a constantly changing school world”.

In essence, through their inclusion and participation in international networks and projects, staff can expand their horizons, make comparisons and share valuable insights with foreign experts and colleagues, acquire new methods specific to their professional role (for teachers this can be in the form of acquiring new teaching methods and assessment techniques), and build new relationships through international partnerships that can add value in the future and promote further career development.

3.1. Activities to promote skills for participation in international networks and EU projects

Дейности за насърчаване на умения за участие in international networks and EU projects

Here are some examples of activities that can be applied successfully to promote career development skills of staff (incl. team building) at the organizational level or in the context of their participation and inclusion in international networks and EU projects. The purpose of the exercises is to help participants develop relationships, communicate better, also to improve morale, promote individual strengths, stimulate engagement and motivation and many other.



Additional resources (Cooks-Cambell, 2023):

Activity 1: Whodunit

Group size: 5-10 people

Objective: To improve the knowledge participants have of each other and enhance communication skills.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Needed materials: notes, pens.

Instructions:

This exercise requires a small group of people to write on a note one interesting thing they've done in their life. These include activities like being the winner of a food-eating competition, skydiving, and other (the more exciting the activity is, the better). The note is then placed into a container that other participants of the group pick from. Players then try to guess which person fits the note selected. They have to give reasons and others can openly discuss as to why this may be right or wrong.

Activity 2: The marshmallow challenge

Group size: groups of 4 members

Objective: to test how creatively participants work together

Time: 20-30 minutes

Needed materials: spaghetti, marshmallows, one yard of string and measuring tape

Instructions:

Participants are given 20 sticks of spaghetti, one marshmallow, plus one yard of string and tape. Using these materials, each team has to create the tallest freestanding structure possible. In essence, participants try to work together on a creative, lighthearted task. But while this activity is laid back, members learn the strong effects of collaboration which can be very beneficial in the context of career development. After the structures are built, players determine the winner using a measuring tape.



Activity 3: Frostbite

Group size: groups of 5 or 6 people

Objective: to encourage cooperation between participants

Time: 20-30 minutes

Needed materials: sticky notes or post-its, toothpicks, thick cardboard boxes, and a fan.

Instructions:

This activity requires the roles of a team leader and subordinates. Also necessary are materials such as sticky notes or post-its, toothpicks, thick cardboard boxes, and a fan.

Ignoring the environment, participants pretend to be in the Arctic. They are being guided on an arctic exhibition which they need to survive. Team members have to build the shelter for their survival. In a democratic setting, teammates elect a leader to guide them through this activity.

The team leader must give detailed instructions on how this structure should be built. He/she cannot participate in the building itself due to frostbite suffered during the journey. While blindfolded, team members build the structure using the leader's verbal instructions.

This activity is beneficial as it teaches supervisory abilities and instruction-taking skills which are very important aspects for career development and participation in international networks. Participants also improve their time management through this exercise.

Activity 4: Human knot

Group size: 8-16 people

Objective: to build collaboration between participants

Time: 20-30 minutes

Instructions:

This activity is suitable for large teams and can push people outside of their comfort zones. While gathered in a circle, participants join right and left hands with a person opposite them. Teammates cannot hold hands with the person next to them.

When all members have their hands in a knot, the exercise requires this knot to be untangled without releasing their hands. Communication and careful instruction are needed to be successful.



The first team to stand in a perfect circle with hands joined wins. This activity is beneficial because it builds skills for collaboration and communication which are very important for staff (incl. in educational organizations).

Applying the abovementioned exercises of the Training program to staff can help foster the skills needed for career development and improve aspects such as participation in international networks. The next chapter goes into more detail on ways to promote inclusion in European projects (incl. in Erasmus+ projects), whose valuable impact on staff was shortly described in this chapter.

Used sources:

Whitfield, B. (2022, October 28). Career Development. Career Development: Definition, Planning & Resources | Built In. <https://builtin.com/career-development>

Triunfo, M. P. (2019). European project design: The advantages for teachers and students to participate in a transnational mobility project. ETN Magazine. <https://www.etnmagazine.eu/european-project-design/european-project-design-the-advantages-for-teachers-and-students-to-participate-in-a-transnational-mobility-project/>

Cooks-Campbell, A. (2023, January 25). 30 team building exercises for work in 2024. BetterUp. <https://www.betterup.com/blog/team-building-exercises>

3.2.Promoting inclusion in European projects (incl. Erasmus+)

Erasmus+ is an EU program which aims to support fields such as education, training, youth and sport in Europe. For the period 2021-2027 the programme focuses on important issues such as social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting youth's participation in democratic life. It also supports priorities and activities in accordance with the European Education Area, Digital Education Action Plan and the European Skills Agenda, and implements the EU Youth Strategy for the period 2019-2027.

The Erasmus+ provides a number of opportunities, including mobility and cooperation opportunities in the areas of higher education, VET, school education, adult education, youth and sport. Some of these are specifically targeted towards teaching staff. According to the official Erasmus+ website, <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>, numerous opportunities are available for

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staff in educational organizations, who wish to spend some time teaching at an institution in another country. Moreover, these options are available to both individuals who work in the educational field, and to those in business sectors who wish to spread their knowledge and expertise on a given subject to students.

It is important to mention that opportunities to teach abroad with the Erasmus+ program are available for educational organizations at different levels. Here are some examples:

- Higher education (HE)

The programme supports the teaching at higher education institutions in other countries (as long as the country is part of the Erasmus+ program or a Partner country). This opportunity is not only for educators, but also for individuals working in businesses who wish to share their knowledge and experience in a given field.

- Vocational education and training (VET)

According to the official website of the Erasmus + programme, it also supports teaching assignments at VET institutions abroad. If an educator works in the field of VET, they can spend time teaching at another educational organisation as long as it is in a country which is part of the Erasmus+ programme. The experience is valuable for educational staff, because they expand their horizons, gain new perspectives on education, exchange knowledge with their colleagues abroad, and learn new good practices and methods in the field of VET.

- School education

The program also supports teaching assignments at schools in other countries for staff who work in pre-primary, primary and secondary school education. Through teaching abroad, school educators can gain new perspectives on education, exchange knowledge with their colleagues abroad and learn new good practices, educational and assessment methods. These opportunities are only available between schools in countries, which are part of the Erasmus+ programme.

- Adult education

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The Erasmus+ program also supports teaching assignments at adult education organisations in foreign countries. Educators can spend time teaching or providing training at another educational organisation within an Erasmus+ Programme country. These experiences are highly valuable as they can increase language skills, cultural knowledge and competencies and provide a new perspective on teaching practices and methods.

In addition to teaching opportunities, according to the official website, the Erasmus + programme also provides training opportunities for staff. They are available to those working in the field of education, regardless if they are in a teaching, or non-teaching role.

The training opportunities conducted abroad can include: job shadowing, observation periods, professional development courses, structured courses, training assignments or specific events for competence building. They can take place both at educational organizations or other relevant types of organizations. Again, the mentioned opportunities for professional development are available for those individuals working at all levels of education and are in the following fields: higher education, VET, school education (pre-primary, primary and secondary) and adult education.

Additional funding is available for staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions and they have the right to the same support and services provided to local staff by the receiving institutions (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>).

In addition to Erasmus+ teaching and training opportunities for staff, learning mobility opportunities are also available and have the goal to encourage the mobility of target groups such as students, staff, trainees, apprentices, youth workers and youth. The educational institution must take an active part in the organization of the mobility for individuals.

According to the official Erasmus + website, the training period should last a minimum of 2 days and cannot last more than 1 month (for courses and training) and 2 months (for job shadowing). This excludes travelling time.

There are also a number of conditions to participate in training abroad: for example, for the sector of school education, the school must apply to acquire an Erasmus + accreditation in the field of school education or to participate in a short-term mobility project. The educational organization should also observe the quality standards for mobility projects on good management practices,



providing quality and support to participants, and disseminating results and knowledge about the Erasmus + programme.

Before the start of the training period, the individual, together with the sending the receiving organisation must sign a Mobility Agreement. This document includes the learning objectives, rights and responsibilities and how the teaching period will be formally recognized.

EU grants are paid to the coordinating organisation (for example, the school) and are given to cover travel costs and subsistence during the person's time in the foreign country, as well as for organisational support to participating organisations. Moreover, the Erasmus+ programme provides means to support the inclusion of participants with fewer opportunities.

N.B. The individual cannot apply directly for a grant but applications should be prepared by schools, who (after approval) are responsible for choosing participants for the training for staff. The selection process should meet the principles of fairness, inclusivity, and transparency.

There are numerous benefits from learning mobilities such as increased capacity to work at the international / EU level, improved management skills, enhanced access to networks, opportunities and projects as well as good practices and methods, improved ICT and foreign language skills and many others (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/learning-mobility-of-individuals>).

Educational organizations can send or receive students and staff to or from Erasmus+ countries. Staff can teach or train in a foreign country and participate in exchange and cooperation. This can greatly enhance the teaching competencies and professional development of employees.

Additional resources:

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide for award criteria and eligibility criteria, and funding rules - <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/erasmus-programme-guide-2021-version-3>

National Agencies – they can help with applications and answering questions. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/contacts/national-agencies?facets_permanent%7Cfield_eac_topics=1964



eTwinning - a community for schools, where individuals working in a school in Europe can communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share experience, and be part of the largest learning community in Europe. <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>

The School Education Gateway - a platform for teachers, schools, experts, and others to find information on news, trends, policies, initiatives, and activities in the field of school education, as well as contribute by discussing and engaging important issues with peers. <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm>

How to promote inclusion in European projects (incl. Erasmus+) (based on https://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/f6b3644b-2b19-497c-819e-542163b5c047.0003.02/DOC_1):

- Address insufficient language skills that continue to be an important barrier for participation in European projects (incl. Erasmus+) in many countries (for students and teachers/staff).
- Improve awareness about programmes such as the Erasmus+ program among staff and provide specific information for its positive impact on professional and personal development. For example, show staff The Léargas report “Erasmus+ School Education: The Impact of Mobility Projects on the Professional Development of Staff” (<https://www.leargas.ie/resource/leargas-school-education-report-2022/>) on the impact of Erasmus+ mobility projects that has found that “staff who participated in opportunities such as training and job shadowing in other European countries reported improvements in skills such as collaboration, leadership, analytical problem-solving and creativity, as well as increases in motivation and job satisfaction”.
- Expand the choice of host institutions and participate in educational networks such as eTwinning, The School Education Gateway, and other.
- Consider the important aspect of personal motivation because it is the most important starting point for getting interested in the Erasmus+ programme and European projects, in general. It is vital to consider what drives staff to participate and what can encourage or

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hinder such inclusion – for example, personal or professional commitments, lack of language skills, insufficient ambition, etc.

- Spread information on the opportunities that European projects (incl. Erasmus+) provide specifically for staff: opportunity to teach/train abroad, to learn/improve a foreign language, to meet new people and expand their network, exchange knowledge and methods with foreign colleagues, to develop ICT skills, soft skills, intercultural competencies and other; to enhance their competitiveness on the labor market and improve their future employment opportunities, etc.
- Examine the issues and barriers that staff in the organization continue to encounter when considering participating in a European (incl. Erasmus+) project (e.g. work obligations, personal reasons) and develop a plan to prevent or deal with them accordingly.

In essence, according to the DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES (2010), knowledge about European programmes such as the Erasmus+ is one of the important factors that might promote participation in projects. Knowledge can be divided into two types: awareness about the program and “brand” of the program. The first type includes those who are not aware the programme even exists, or are not sufficiently familiar with it (most staff at educational organizations nowadays have this type of knowledge). More efforts should be made to enhance the second type of knowledge among staff (knowledge about the “brand” of the programme and its impact) as it can influence their decision to participate in such projects.

Used sources:

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/teaching-opportunities-for-staff>

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/training-opportunities-for-staff>

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/learning-mobility-of-individuals>



European Parliament - DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES. (2010).
Policy Department B - Publications Office of the European Union. IMPROVING THE
PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS
PROGRAMME. https://publications.europa.eu/resource/ellar/f6b3644b-2b19-497c-819e-542163b5c047.0003.02/DOC_1

The Léargas report “Erasmus+ School Education: The Impact of Mobility Projects on the
Professional Development of Staff” (2022) <https://www.leargas.ie/resource/leargas-school-education-report-2022/>

3.3.Active inclusion in educational platforms

The European Commission supports various school education platforms and initiatives aimed at enhancing education across European countries. The European School Education Platform is one of these platforms, providing resources and opportunities for educators. According to the official website <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en> : “the platform is the meeting point for all stakeholders in the school education sector – school staff, researchers, policymakers – to find news, interviews, publications, practice examples, courses and partners for their Erasmus+ projects”. Additionally, the European Commission has other initiatives and platforms focused on education, such as:

- eTwinning: This is a community for schools in Europe allowing teachers to collaborate, share ideas, and engage in joint projects with partner schools across different countries. eTwinning is part of the European School Education Platform.
- Erasmus+: While not exclusively for school education, Erasmus+ supports education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. It provides funding opportunities for educators, schools, and educational institutions to carry out projects, exchanges, and mobility programs.



- EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe): EPALE is an electronic platform which is specifically designed for adult education professionals, providing a space for networking, collaboration, and sharing best practices in adult learning across Europe.
- Europeana Education: Europeana is a digital platform that provides access to millions of digitized items from European museums, libraries, archives, and galleries. Europeana Education offers resources and tools for educators to use cultural heritage materials in teaching.
- Scientix: It's a community for science education in Europe, offering teaching materials, webinars, and resources to enhance STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education in schools.

These initiatives, among others supported by the European Commission, aim to promote collaboration, innovation, and the exchange of best practices in education across Europe. Each platform or initiative serves specific educational purposes, ranging from professional development for educators to fostering international partnerships among schools.

To promote the active inclusion of educational staff in the abovementioned platforms (e.g. EPALE, eTwinning and the European School Education Platform), organizations should consider the following steps:

- 1. Highlight the benefits of educational platforms among staff:** The organization should clearly communicate the benefits and positive impact of participating in these platforms, such as professional development opportunities, access to valuable resources, networking with peers, and the chance to contribute to the broader education community.
- 2. Emphasize professional development opportunities available on such platforms:** The organization should emphasize how participation in these platforms can contribute to teachers' professional development. This includes exposure to new teaching and assessment methods, access to innovative resources, and the chance to learn from experiences in different educational contexts.

3. **Recognition and certification:** Recognition for active participation should be offered, such as certificates or badges. Many educators appreciate acknowledgment for their contributions, and this can also enhance their professional profile.
4. **Collaborative projects:** the educational organizations should encourage teachers to participate in collaborative projects available on these platforms. Collaborative projects not only foster a sense of community but also provide opportunities for sharing and learning from each other.
5. **Share success stories:** The organizations can also share success stories of educators who have benefited from participating in these platforms. Personal testimonials can be powerful motivators and provide real-world examples of the positive impact of engagement.
6. **Provide training and support:** The organizations could offer training sessions to help teachers navigate and make the most of the platform's features. Providing technical support and guidance can reduce barriers to entry and boost confidence in using the platforms effectively.
7. **Incorporate platform activities into Professional development plans:** The participation in these platforms can be integrated into teachers' professional development plans. This formal recognition can motivate educators to engage regularly.
8. **Create a community of practice:** It can be beneficial to foster a sense of community among teachers by creating forums, discussion groups, or virtual meetups where they can share experiences, ask questions, and collaborate on educational projects.
9. **Showcase impact on teaching practices:** It can also be beneficial to demonstrate how participation in these platforms can positively impact classroom teaching. Highlighting specific examples of teachers implementing new strategies or resources they discovered through the platform might help.
10. **Make it time-efficient:** Organizations should recognize the time constraints teachers face and emphasize how participation can be integrated into their existing routines without overwhelming them. Highlight quick and valuable activities.



11. Feedback and improvement: feedback on the platforms should be encouraged and used to make improvements. When teachers see that their input is valued and leads to positive changes, they are more likely to stay engaged.

It is important to mention that motivation for active inclusion in educational platforms often comes from a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. By addressing both the benefits and the intrinsic value of participation, a more compelling case can be created for teachers to actively engage with these platforms.

Additional resources:

EPALE Official Website - <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en>

eTwinning Official Website - <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>

European School Education Platform Official Website - <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en>

Europeana Education Official Website - <https://pro.europeana.eu/page/europeana-education>

Scientix Official Website - <https://www.scientix.eu/>

3.3.1. EPALE

According to the official website (<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en>), the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) is “a multilingual open membership community for teachers, trainers, researchers, academics, policy makers and anyone else with a professional role in adult learning across Europe”. The platform is currently funded by the European Commission and the Erasmus+ programme. It follows the EU’s overall strategy which focuses on promoting more and better learning opportunities for all adults and has the objective to improve the quality of adult education in Europe.

This goal is achieved through the provision of support to strengthen the adult learning professions. The members of the platform can freely connect with and learn from their colleagues across other European countries, via means such as blog posts, forums, the Partner Search tool, organized events and other. They can engage with other European experts through online discussions and debates, communities of practice, rating content and commenting under blog posts available on the website. Members also have the opportunity to request a collaborative space (i.e. a private space within EPALE) in order to have discussions, upload documents, share relevant news and



events in the group calendar. They can also find projects and networking opportunities using the Partner Search tool mentioned above.

EPALE also provides a variety of valuable information for those who work in adult education (news, resources, courses, best practices, etc.). This content can also be provided by the members themselves through their engagement in the EPALE community. EPALE aims to build an online community for the adult learning sector and adult learning professionals.

N.B. Unlike eTwinning (see chapter 3.2.3), EPALE does not offer the possibility to twin classes, as classes do not exist for adults in the same way as they do in primary and secondary education. Instead, those working in the field of adult education can debate themes and share best practices directly on the platform.

To register on EPALE, username, password and name of the organization must be used. After receiving an email from the EPALE helpdesk confirming the request, the person then gets approved as a fully-fledged member by EPALE and gains access to a variety of information and support.

To promote participation in EPALE among staff (e.g. educators, trainers and others), the educational organization can highlight the benefits and positive impact of their inclusion in the free to join platform. Those benefits include:

- ability to communicate and exchange best practices with other European educators, trainers, policymakers, researchers, academics, and volunteers in adult education;
- opportunities for participating in discussions with others working in the same sector;
- opportunities for finding partners and ideas related to adult learning projects;
- free and easy access to and opportunity to upload and share events, resources, news, reports, blog posts and articles (incl. policy documents and relevant project materials) on the topics of adult learner support, learner environments, life skills, adult education policy developments, best practices in work quality improvement and many other.

More on the benefits of EPALE for educators can be found on the following websites: <https://www.leargas.ie/epale/> and the official website of EPALE - <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en>



Used sources:

EPALE official website - <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en>

Léargas official website - <https://www.leargas.ie/epale/>

3.3.2. European School Education Platform

According to the official website of the European School Education Platform (ESEP) - <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en>, this platform is described as “the meeting point for all stakeholders in the school education sector – school staff, researchers, policymakers – to find news, interviews, publications, practice examples, courses and partners for their Erasmus+ projects”. It is also the home to eTwinning area (discussed in Chapter 3.2.3) – the community for schools in Europe.

The ESEP was launched in 2022 and specifically designed for professionals in the school education sector (mentioned above) who work at different levels - from early childhood education and care to primary and secondary school, incl. initial vocational education and training. A positive feature of ESEP is that it’s an online multilingual platform free of charge for all users (for more information visit: <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/about>).

In essence, the ESEP is the merging of two previous platforms of the European Commission - the School Education Gateway and the eTwinning platform, in a single, modern and accessible space. The new integrated platform allows educators to discover and explore valuable content and services related to education. It aims to provide a unique and personalised experience, while also fostering the sense of community and collaboration (EU Neighbours south, 2021).

The ESEP further contributes to the professional development of experts in education and training, in European countries and beyond. The ESEP is also based on the Erasmus+ Programme’s three principles: to build a greener, more inclusive, and more digital education for Europe. It promotes the objectives of the European Education Area (EEA), especially the Digital Education Action Plan and the development of the key competences (EU Neighbours south, 2021).



To promote participation in ESEP among staff (e.g. educators, trainers and others), the educational organization can highlight the benefits and positive impact of their inclusion in the free to join platform. According to the official ESEP website, these benefits include:

- New content published every week, incl. opinion pieces shared by experts, news, interviews, and examples of best practices in school education;
- Easy and free access to valuable resources such as recent research reports, teaching materials created in EU projects, training courses, the European Toolkit for Schools with materials on preventing Early School Leaving (ESL) and a self-assessment tool helping educators develop school activities;
- Access to information about funding through Erasmus+ programme opportunities, incl. 3 practical tools (course catalogue, mobility opportunities directory and strategic partnership search). These tools help educational organizations prepare their Erasmus+ project applications;
- Providing professional development opportunities such as free online courses, webinars, and teaching materials in collaboration with the EU Academy. More information on different professional development formats and pedagogical approaches can be found by reading the Continuous Professional Development Framework.
- Opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and create projects with other educational staff in Europe in the eTwinning community.

The ESEP is funded by the Erasmus+ programme and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture. It is operated by European Schoolnet (coordination, content, and services) and Tremend Software Consulting SRL (technical infrastructure) under service contracts with the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Used sources:

European School Education Platform Official Website - <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en>

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EU Neighbours south. (2021). The countdown for the European School Education Platform has started! <https://south.euneighbours.eu/news/countdown-european-school-education-platform-has-started/>

3.3.3. eTwinning

According to HRDC Bulgaria (<https://etwinning.hrdc.bg/kakvo-e-etwinning/>), the eTwinning activity was created in 2005 after a recommendation by the European Commission for the development of a new tool to promote electronic communication between European schools, and to help educators improve their ICT and language skills.

In the period 2007-2013, eTwinning was part of the "Comenius" sectoral program and of the Education and Training Program of the European Commission - "Lifelong Learning". During these years, eTwinning turned from a virtual platform for projects between teachers across Europe, to the largest social network for educators and a reliable database of projects and partnerships under EU-funded programs such as "Comenius" and "Leonardo da Vinci".

From 2014, eTwinning became part of the new European program for education, training, youth and sport "Erasmus+" (2014 - 2020). eTwinning served as an inspiration for the development of other educational platforms such as EPALE (launched in 2014) and the School Education Gateway.

As for the new Erasmus+ period (2021-2027), eTwinning is closely linked to the program and has growing importance. Managed by the Central Coordination Unit in Brussels, Belgium and coordinated by the National Coordination Units in each country, the eTwinning platform enables educators to register for free on the portal and have access to a variety of pedagogical resources (HRDC, 2024). The eTwinning portal also have different tools that provide teachers with opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.

A positive quality of the platform is that it is very easy to use and has a rich database with ready-made project models. This can be of benefit for those working in kindergartens, schools at the primary and secondary levels and resource centers, who can participate in projects aimed at integrated education of children (incl. with special education needs). Those projects can be at the national or international (European) level, or between educational organizations (intraschool



projects). They can be carried out by educators/teachers, school teams, associations, students and others.

Since 2022, the European School Education Platform (described in detail in Chapter 3.2.2) is the home of eTwinning. Additional information can be found on the following website: <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>

So, what are the benefits for educators of joining the eTwinning Platform? To promote participation in among staff (e.g. educators, trainers and others), educational organizations should highlight the advantages as well as the positive impact of the inclusion in the easy-to-use platform.

According to the official website of eTwinning, these benefits include:

- becoming part of the ‘Community for schools in Europe’;
- having access to different opportunities to collaborate with, network (through engaging in Rooms, eTwinning groups, and European projects) and get inspiration from other European experts working in the educational sector. For example, Rooms are micro-groups for participating in video-conferencing sessions supported by a forum and a file archive, whilst eTwinning groups are virtual places where members meet and discuss specific subjects. On the other hand, eTwinning projects include activities on different topics and key competences involving 2 or more teachers and their students. Each project has its own TwinSpace, which is a free platform only accessible to other eTwinning members in the project, and selected guests and students.
- being able to organize and run online and offline activities with students along with other educators from countries included in the Erasmus+ programme;
- having the opportunity to engage in collaborative projects with the support of the TwinSpace environment;
- being able to share valuable information with peers and thousands of educators who are part of eTwinning and share the same vision of making education more inclusive and better for students. Members of the platform are called eTwinners and can meet together and network online, at educational organizations, at eTwinning events and conferences and other;

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- having free access to project kits, practice examples and testimonials, and an online environment where members can communicate, develop projects, share, learn together according to their interests, etc.;
- having the opportunity to develop professional skills and competencies and engage in lifelong learning through the eTwinning's webinars (live 1 hour long online video sessions where teachers get to learn about and discuss a variety of themes), webinar series (2 webinar sessions connected by an interactive online activity), online courses (incl. Massive Open Online Courses- MOOCs, lasting for 4-6 weeks and requiring 12 – 25 hours of learning time. Participants conduct the activities at a time of their convenience and receive a certificate upon completion), self-teaching materials, conferences, and other on-site professional development opportunities where educators can meet up other experts in the educational sector and increase their competencies. These events enable educators to network, learn new things together, and feel part of the eTwinning community.
- access to opportunities for future teachers who need support when starting their professional careers and other.

According to the official website (<https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>), National Support Organisations have the responsibility to validate registrations for those wanting to become members of the eTwinning platform, which maintains it a safe space for everyone. Those organizations also provide support and guidance and recognize educators 'work with National and European Quality Labels. In addition to this, innovative projects are included in the annual eTwinning book, whilst excellent ones receive eTwinning European Prizes and are uploaded on the project gallery.

Another important role is that of the eTwinning Ambassadors who are chosen at a national level, and their responsibility is to provide training and support to members. Anyone can become an eTwinning Ambassador, and any school can get the eTwinning School Label. The educational organizations that receive the Label are regarded as models of the principles of the platform, show excellent qualities such as leadership, collaboration and sharing, and their students are seen as agents of change, inclusion, and pedagogical innovation.

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Moreover, as eTwinning is a community, it has events. For example, a yearly theme which is the focus of two online campaigns, where members can share ideas, plan projects, create materials and learn together (<https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>). Every year on the 9th of May, eTwinning community celebrates the Day of Europe as eTwinning Day with interesting activities for all eTwinners.

N.B. To join eTwinning as members, educators have to register as users on the European School Education Platform using EU login (https://ecas.ec.europa.eu/cas/eim/external/register.cgi?loginRequestId=ECAS_LR-14678085-tZc3zbm9WvEko8X3zneRLwQfwYhJtpH2lXatGZX8zPSnHoGBezajoK64FN45PVo6rhQIQhPd_oZbwFSt6DpBZ5YK-yntOf97TTHqI3dC5ETtzwP-ZDIGTLM2mESq1kCA72RI1Y58M74chSbdki6gkE5KsgVHyY7Mvqe6V3HmdhhBuUw7YdzHOVGM1fykuCeBlmEesm) and have to request validation from the National Support Organization in their respective country. It must be considered that only school staff can join the eTwinning community. If the educator is not a member of school staff, they can still enjoy and network in other sections of the European School Education Platform for free but not eTwinning specifically.

Used sources:

HRDC Bulgaria (accessed in January, 2024). What is eTwinning?
<https://etwinning.hrdc.bg/kakvo-e-etwinning/>

Official website of eTwinning <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>



4. Adaptation and integration of the training program in national contexts (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Poland)

In order for the Training program for staff in educational organizations to be effective in increasing the capacity and skills, it must be adapted and integrated according to the respective national context in the country (in this case, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Poland). This makes sure that the resource is adequate and relevant to the needs of educators in these states, and that it considers the specificities of the educational sector there.

In general, adapting and integrating training programs for staff in educational organizations in specific national contexts like Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Poland involves several key steps:

- **Needs Assessment:** This step includes understanding the specific needs and challenges within each national context as well as conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups with educators to identify the areas where staff capacity building is most required.
- **Tailored Content Development:** This involves creating or adapting training content that addresses the identified needs in the previous step. The content should be culturally sensitive, taking into account the educational systems, policies, and specific challenges of each country.
- **Language and Cultural Considerations:** This step includes ensuring that the training materials are available in the respective languages of Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Poland (Bulgarian, Greek and Polish) as well as incorporating cultural examples, case studies, and contexts relevant to each country's educational landscape.
- **Collaboration with Local Experts:** Partnering with local educational experts, institutions, or authorities in each country to ensure the training programs align with national curricula, policies, and priorities. This collaboration can enhance the relevance and acceptance of the Training program for staff in educational organizations.
- **Customized Delivery Modes:** This consists of considering the most effective delivery methods for each national context. This step could include in-person workshops, online



courses, webinars, or blended learning approaches, catering to the preferences and accessibility of educators in each country.

- Professional Exchange and Networking: Facilitating opportunities for educators from Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Poland to engage in cross-country exchanges, workshops, or peer-learning activities. This fosters the sharing of best practices and experiences among educators.
- Evaluation and Continuous Improvement: Implementing an evaluation mechanism to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the training programs for staff in educational organizations. Using this feedback can serve to continuously improve and refine the content and delivery methods.
- Policy Support and Sustainability: The last step can incorporate advocating for policy support at the national level to institutionalize and sustain the training program. Alignment with national educational policies can ensure long-term support and integration of capacity-building initiatives.

By tailoring the training content to the needs of educators, considering language and cultural aspects, collaborating with local experts, and employing varied delivery methods, the capacity of staff in educational organizations across Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Poland can be significantly increased in ways that are sensitive and responsive to each country's context.

Adapting and integrating training programs for educational staff in Bulgaria (resources):

- The European School Education Platform (ESEP): This platform offers resources, articles, and information on educational practices in European countries, including Bulgaria. Educators can visit ESEP's website - <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/bg> and search for articles, publications, or resources related to professional development or staff training in Bulgaria.
- Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science: The ministry's official website - <https://web.mon.bg/> offers policy documents, educational strategies, and reports that shed



light on professional development initiatives for educators. They might also collaborate with European initiatives, providing further information on training programs.

- Local Universities and Educational Institutions in Bulgaria: Universities and educational institutions might publish research papers, case studies, or reports related to educational staff training and professional development. Their websites or research repositories could be valuable sources of information. Such universities and educational institutions in Bulgaria are: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” - <https://www.uni-sofia.bg/> , New Bulgarian University (Sofia) -<https://www.nbu.bg/> , University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski” <https://uni-plovdiv.bg/> Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar” - <https://www.vfu.bg/> and many others.
- European Union Program Portals: Programs such as Erasmus+ or eTwinning often feature case studies or project reports related to educational training initiatives in Bulgaria. Exploring these program portals might provide insights into successful training approaches. The educators can visit them on the following websites: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/> and <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>
- Educational Journals and Publications: Search academic databases or online journals that focus on education and pedagogy (such as the Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy - <http://bjsep.org/>). Look for articles or studies that discuss teacher training and professional development in Bulgaria.
- Educational Conferences and Seminars: Proceedings or materials from conferences, seminars, or workshops focusing on education in Bulgaria might offer valuable insights into ongoing training programs for educational staff.

Adapting and integrating training programs for educational staff in Cyprus (resources):

- Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth: the official website of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth– <https://www.moec.gov.cy/en/> can provide guidelines, policies, and resources related to teacher training and professional development. This



information can guide the development, adaptation and integration of training programs for educational staff.

- Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI): The CPI is responsible for teacher training and development. Educators can check a variety of available resources, workshops, and training materials on the official website of CPI - <https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?lang=en> . This information can also be used to better adapt training programs for educational staff in Cyprus.
- European Union Programs: Educators can explore EU-funded programs related to education and professional development. These programs often provide valuable resources and support for educational initiatives and can be used to better integrate and adapt training programs for educational staff. Educators can visit programs such as Erasmus+ and eTwinning on the following websites <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/> and <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning> .
- Professional Associations: Connecting with professional associations for teachers in Cyprus may offer insights into the specific needs of educators and they can be valuable partners in designing, adapting, integrating and implementing training programs for educational staff.
- Local Universities and Educational Institutes: Local universities and educational institutions might publish research findings, case studies, reports or programs related to teacher training and professional development. Their websites or research repositories could be valuable sources of information. Such universities and educational institutions in Cyprus are: University of Cyprus, Nicosia (<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/>), Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol (<https://www.cut.ac.cy/>), University of Nicosia (<https://www.unic.ac.cy/>) and many others.
- Online Platforms and Learning Resources: Educators can explore online platforms that offer courses and resources for professional development. Platforms like Coursera (<https://www.coursera.org/>), edX (<https://www.edx.org/>), and others may have relevant content that can be adapted and integrated into training programs for educational staff.



Adapting and integrating training programs for educational staff in Poland (resources):

- Collaboration with Educational Institutions: a valuable option is to work closely with local educational institutions, universities, and teacher training centers to understand their ongoing programs and how the training programs can complement existing initiatives. This can also contribute to the adaptation and integration of the training program for educational staff. Prominent educational institutions in Poland are: University of Warsaw (<https://en.uw.edu.pl/>), Jagiellonian University, Krakow (<https://en.uj.edu.pl/>) Warsaw University of Technology (<https://www.pw.edu.pl/>) and many others.
- Government Education Agencies: another option is to connect with the Polish Ministry of National Education (<https://www.gov.pl/>) and other relevant government agencies responsible for education. Understanding their priorities, policies, and any specific guidelines for professional development may be beneficial for adapting and integrating the training program for educational staff.
- Needs Assessment: Conducting a thorough needs assessment to identify the specific training needs of educational staff in Poland can also be beneficial for adapting and integrating the training program into the Polish context. This can involve surveys, interviews, and focus groups with teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.
- Professional Development Organizations: Exploring partnerships with professional development organizations in Poland is another option. These organizations often have experience in designing and delivering training programs for educators.
- Online Platforms and Courses: Online platforms and courses for professional development such as Coursera (<https://www.coursera.org/>), edX (<https://www.edx.org/>) or local equivalents can offer a wide range of courses that educators can take at their own pace. This can lead to valuable insights which can contribute to the successful adaptation and integration of the training program.



- **Local Experts and Trainers:** Collaborating with local experts and trainers who understand the cultural and educational nuances of Poland can help tailor the content to be more relevant and effective.
- **Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms:** Another step is to establish clear evaluation criteria and feedback mechanisms to continuously improve the training programs based on the needs and experiences of the participants.

In summary, successful adaptation and integration of training programs to the national contexts in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Poland require ongoing collaboration and a commitment to addressing the evolving needs of educational staff in those countries. Keeping abreast of changes in education policies can help with the updating of the training program according to those needs.



VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the “Training program for staff in educational organizations - How to increase the capacity of staff?” is a beneficial resource that provides practical and effective exercises, activities and tools for staff working in educational organizations (for example, teachers, trainers, educators, psychologists, pedagogical advisers, school counselors, and other pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff) to increase their skills and competencies in the following 3 areas:

- Improving personal development (Personality-motivational and potential development, addressing deficits and needs);
- Increasing professional development (Roles, dealing with burnout and rotation, the forecasting process);
- Career development and inclusion in EU projects and international networks, incl. Erasmus+.

This resource is freely available online and is translated into four languages – Bulgarian, English, Greek and Polish. It can be used and applied to a pilot group of teachers/trainers at educational organizations to increase their capacity in the abovementioned fields.

In summary, by applying the included activities to teachers/trainers, educational organizations can build a positive and supportive environment that enhances the skills, knowledge, and capacity of their staff, which will ultimately benefit the students themselves as this will increase the quality of education at the European level.



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Project 2022-1-BG01-KA220-SCH-000085347
Healthy at school. Supporting the well-being and mental health
of students and teachers / HAS, Erasmus+



Funded by
the European Union

Association of Psychologists in Bulgaria, Bulgaria, 2024

ISBN 978-619-7781-08-3 (print edition), ISBN 978-619-7781-09-0 (e-book, PDF)

For more information about the project:

e-mail: aypbvarna@gmail.com

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