**Online Platform for Exchange of Special Needs Youth Work Methods (OPEN)**

*Project Identification Number 2017-1-BG01-KA205-35775*

Context

The project combines the efforts of 5 youth NGOs and 1 umbrella organization from 5 countries (BG, IT, MK, RO and SI) at cross-sectoral level (youth and school education) in developing the first online platform (OPEN platform) for validating good practices in youth work that can be applied to 5 groups of youth learners with special needs**: Autism, Visual and Hearing Impairments, Dyslexia, Physical Difficulties**. These are the most common types of learning difficulties, acknowledged on national and European level. More and more youth work needs to address these challenges young people face. However, youth workers across EU do not have always the necessary instruments and know-how. Our project will explore a possible solution to this challenge by linking special needs education specialists and youth workers in our partner countries and across Europe through the innovative OPEN platform.

One of the project’s objectives is to develop an evaluation methodology for validating the good practices as applicable in one or more of the 5 areas of learning difficulties (Autism, Visual and Hearing Impairments, Dyslexia, Physical Difficulties);

## Partners

1.National Association of Resource Teachers - Bulgaria

2.Center for Youth Activism CYA KRIK - Macedonia

3.CET Platform - Bulgaria

4.OFENSIVA TINERILOR ASOCIATIA - Romania

5.YOUNET - Italy

6.CELJSKI MLADINSKI CENTER, JAVNI ZAVOD FOR MLADINSKO KULTURO, IZOBRAZEVANJE, INFORMIRANJE IN SPORT - Slovenia

How we define “good practice”

Case study is a well-known qualitative method for carrying out of researches.

**It is usually used when[[1]](#endnote-1):**

* The Program is Unique If a program is highly innovative. However, it is still necessary to document those impacts systematically, and to consider whether those impacts resulted from the program. In addition, the rich detail of a case study provides good information about the design of a program and the context in which it is delivered, thus allowing others to determine its appropriateness for their areas.
* An Existing Program in a Different Setting A case study can also be a useful evaluation tool when the project involves implementing an existing program in a new setting.
* A Unique Outcome In the course of doing a purely quantitative, non-case study evaluation, an outlier may occur (an instance in which the outcome for one member of the population differs greatly from the outcomes for the rest of the population). It may be that what happened in that one instance is sufficiently different to warrant an in-depth case study.
* An Unpredictable Environment When the environment is complex and turbulent, the achievement of a pre-established goal may be difficult to predict, or may only be achievable with unacceptably large negative side effects.

On the other hand “best practice” is a term from management and referred to the Cambridge Dictionary is defined as “a [working](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/working) [method](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/method) or set of [working](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/working) [methods](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/method) that is [officially](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/officially) [accepted](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/accepted) as being the [best](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/best) to use in a [particular](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/particular) [business](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/business) or [industry](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/industry), usually [described](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/describe) [formally](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/formally) and in [detail](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/detail).

The business dictionary describes it as “A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.   
  
The evaluator Bill Brozo pointed out the need for a clear definition of this topic and made some. “It is very important to have clear criteria for deciding what constitutes “best practice” on the European scene. In the United States, for instance, this is a code for government approved practices, meaning only those supported by randomized control trials (RCTs) or with empirically verifiable results. …, I suggested two categories: “Best Practice” with just those practices based on empirical findings and “Promising Practices” with those that produce positive results but have not yet been empirically verified. …Another significant challenge is coming to consensus on the criteria of “best” and/or “good” practices. In fact, these two words have been used interchangeably, but may not mean the same thing. In general, best practice implies a significant evidentiary basis of effectiveness for the practice; whereas, good practice may have a record of effectiveness, but not necessarily grounded in empirical evidence.”

For the purpose of our current project we will use the term “good practice” and will refer to a practice which is grounded on a theory. A good practice is not only a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it and may act as a source of inspiration for new projects.

1. Methodology

The good practices within “OPEN” project will be collected in 5 countries: Italy, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and FYROM. As each organization is specialized in a certain type of activity it will focus its efforts in one of the following sectors of disparities:

NART: autism.

FYROM - dyslexia

Romania- blindness

Slovenia – physical difficulties

Italia – deafness

Every organization will collect at least 4 practices from its country. Every partner will use its own approach for identifying these practices – it could be a competition, a desk review, field visits. or other types of activities. Every partner will conduct a first stage evaluation of the national practices and will finally propose 4 practices for final approval. These 4 practices will be translated in English and proposed for a second stage approval.

The second stage of evaluation will be done within the same set of criteria but from other evaluators.

At the end at least 10 practices which are over a certain threshold will be published on the new platform.

Main criteria for evaluation towards the definition of good practice is:

**Theoretical base:** the practice is based on a theory

**Impact:** how the project/training/programme improves the daily routine of the beneficiaries

**Sustainability:** how the resources are used in the most effective way. The“good practice” meets current needs, without compromising the ability to address future needs

**Multiplying capacity:** the practice is transferable with a little adaptation

**Ethics:** principles like participation, equality and non-discrimination are met, professional ethics is ensured

**Innovative aspects –** how the practice in stake is different

**Measurable results:** to define one practice as good it has to be evaluated and to have a proven record on the results.

**Satisfaction of the end users:** the final beneficiaries – young people with disparities have to feel more self-confident and to gain new skills and knowledge for the future, Three-folded approach will be evaluated: change in attitudes, in knowledge and skills acquired.

Description of practice template

No more than 5 pages

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Title | Info wall for dyslexia |
| Implementing organization | Dyslexia association EINSTEIN Skopje  FYRM ,Skopje, [www.disleksija.org.mk](http://www.disleksija.org.mk) , [www.dyslexia-info.com](http://www.dyslexia-info.com), Damjan Nikolovski, [d.nikolovski@disleksija.org.mk](mailto:d.nikolovski@disleksija.org.mk) |
| Target group | Students from 16 high schools |
| Short description, incl reliable theoretical background : | Please describe in several words your practice – the goals, target groups, geographical scope, activities undertaken, results, impact  Goal: Availability of information about each learning disabilities as a possible and probable cause for low grades and hidden talents, for all high school students in Republic Macedonia generated through “Info Wall”  Target groups: students from 16 high schools  Geographical scope: 8 planed regions in Republic of Macedonia  Activities:   1. Creating an Info Wall 2. Structuring a first dyslexia test in Republic of Macedonia 3. Organization of 16 interactive presentations   Results: the first info wall for dyslexia was done  The first dyslexia test in Republic of Macedonia was created  640 students were directly informed about the advantages and disadvantages of dyslexia  More than 1720 students used the opportunity to answer the first dyslexia test  More than 60 web contents was published on the info wall |
| Context | Please describe the context of the practice you propose, including political context and source of financing Who are the users of the good practice?  The propose of this practice was Awareness and education of high school students about advantages and disadvantages of dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia as specific learning disabilities  Source of financing : USAID |
| Sustainability | How long this practice is in the field? What are the required resources – human, financial, capital? Please describe how the resources are used in the most effective way, including financial resources, human resources, and other resources.  The project has been designed as a sustainable one even after the completion of all activities. The project stipulates availability of the Info Wall aimed at the young in the forthcoming two years following the completion of the project. Thus, the younger generations will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the issue of learning difficulties. All activities that are to be implemented within the foreseen deadline will be uploaded on the Info Wall which is to serve as a web portal. This will be beneficial in terms of informing the young people about any states that may cause learning difficulties. This Info Wall will be administered by the Dyslexia Association Einstein. The uploaded contents will be available for a longer period of time, and the Association will maintain and update the Info Wall using alternative sources, i.e. donations and the services of volunteers. Such a designed Info Wall provides numerous opportunities for broadening the young people’s knowledge, such as introducing new e-learning practices. To this end, the Association will put in maximum efforts to find donors following the completion of this project. |
| Methodology | Please describe your methods of work; Who are the institutions, partners, implementing agencies, and donors involved in the good practice, and what is the nature of their involvement? What were the major challenges? How they were overcome? What are the key success factors?  During the project “info wall for dyslexia”, cooperation was established with the local governments from 16 cities in Macedonia. The cooperation with a local authorities was established in order to improve the environment for students with learning disabilities. Also there were excellent cooperation with Ministry of education and science during the project. |
| Innovative aspects | What are the innovative elements? How this practice is better than the traditional approach  This strategy is innovative since for the first time in the country we have an available internet portal where young people would be able to receive information about dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia as specific state and possible reason for low academic success. |
| Vlidation | What are the final outputs (measurable results), how do we know them? How it was evaluated  Visits of the info wall and number of answered online tests |
| Impact | What is the impact? How we know it?  Satisfaction of the high school students |
| Potential for replication | How the practice could be transferred? |
| Ethics | How are the ethical issues incorporated in the implementation of the practice? (Equal opportunities. Inclusion. Equality between men and women, participatory approach, meeting individual needs, ect)  Please provide a photo/link to materials  Our practice is primarily aimed at the secondary school students on the overall territory of Macedonia with equal inclusion of both young girls and boys. They will acquire knowledge and information that can be used to help them and their friends. The final outcome regarding the acquired knowledge will be beneficial for the students with learning difficulties, i.e. 15% of the young students in the Republic of Macedonia. Additionally, such imparted knowledge and information will be beneficial for the young members of the Albanian minority in the Republic of Macedonia having in mind that all information will be adapted and made available in Albanian language as well. The project team will also comprise of members of the Albanian community engaged on a part-time basis and they will contribute to the adaptation of the Info Wall and the self-assessment test in Albanian language. The project envisages direct involvement of secondary school students regarding the dissemination of information on the Info Wall following the previously drafted strategy with stipulated clear guidelines and approach to the other students and teachers. The group of students designated for this specific activity will work under the mentorship of the project team. Three students who have the potential to attain better academic results will be selected from each of the schools in the foreseen regions. All this will contribute to building the sense of responsibility on the part of the involved students and encouraging and stimulating their involvement in further activities in the field of learning difficulties. |

Evaluation methodology

Each practice will be evaluated towards the set of criteria by two independent experts. NART has a pool of experts/resource teachers which will evaluate the practices. The average between the two scorings will be taken valid. Every practice with more than 70 scores will be nominated for good practice and uploaded onto the platform.

If the scores of the two experts vary significantly (more than 15 points), the reconciliation will be organized.

After piloting the evaluation methodology it will be developed as an on-line self-evaluation tool and will be published on the OPEN’s platform where different organizations could use it.

Evaluation grid

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of the evaluator |  |
| Theoretical base: the practice is based on a theory | Yes/no |
| Impact: how the project/training/programme improves the daily routine of the beneficieries | Max 20 scores |
| Sustainability: how the resources are used in the most effective way. The “good practice” meets current needs, without compromising the ability to address future needs | Max 20 scores |
| Multiplying capacity: the practice is transferable with a little adаptation | Max 15 scores |
| Ethics: principles like participation, equality and non-discrimination are met, professional ethics is ensured | Max 15 scores |
| Innovative aspects – how the practice in stake is different | Max 15 scores |
| Measurable results: to define one practice as good it has to be evaluated and to have a proven record on the results. | Max 15 scores |

1. http://case.edu/affil/healthpromotion/ProgramEvaluation.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-1)