PREDIS

PREVENTION OF EARLY DROPOUT OF VET THROUGH INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES OF MIGRANTS AND ROMA

EVALUATION of CONTENTS OF THE TOOLKIT
AND A REFLECTED SUMMARY
OF THE BLENDED LEARNING COURSE

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Contents

Evaluation and Reflected Summary of the BLC

1 Structure of the BLC

The structure, scope, modules, participants and developers of the PREDIS BLC have been described in the introduction of the toolkit[1] and will not be re-discussed here. Only a reflected summary and evaluation of the BLC will be presented here. First, the implementation and evaluation of the in-classroom phase, is briefly highlighted. Second, the online phase is described briefly. Third, the evaluation of contents by participants is presented. Fourth, the evaluation of the implementation process is presented.

2 Implementation and Evaluation of the In-classroom Training

The in-classroom training was implemented before the online training. It took place in the national contexts of the consortium partners. The original plan was to have between 7-10 participants from each national context and a total of 50. However, this number was exceeded in most cases. A total of 58 participants attended. The participants of the in-classroom training included mainly vocational educationists, teachers and other multipliers such as representatives of minority groups like Roma. The in-classroom training was incorporated as the social learning component which fostered the face to face learning encounters. Participants worked through the concepts, exercises and role plays developed by PREDIS. They elaborated contents that are useful for in-classroom teaching and pointed out areas for further modification. Their evaluative feedback was incorporated by the PREDIS consortium for the further modification of the modules.

Inclassroom Evaluations were conducted by participants. Consortium partners as trainers compiled a report and submitted it for further modification of the modules. A selection is presented here. As will be presented below, the evaluation feedback   can be clustered under (1) Role Plays (2) Central Themes of the Modules.

> Role Plays: Awareness of discrimination, causes of structural inequalities and racism and reflecting own privileges.

Trainers in small groups worked on systematizing differences according to difference categories. They identified the groups in society which are discriminated against and groups which are not discriminated against. Participants also discussed concrete examples of discrimination. Participants took up different identities as groups that are discriminated against and groups that are not discriminated against in which they were asked to step forward by the trainers if they could afford access to certain societal resources. In the end, a hierarchy was visible with those who are able to afford the most privileges in the front, the least privileges at the back and in the

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[1] See scope of the program at the beginning of this toolkit.

middle, those who could afford certain privileges . Participants were able to visualize how power is unequally distributed in society based on the unequal distribution of the acted characters in space. Afterwards participants in groups discussed concrete examples of discrimination

Evaluation:

Participants positively evaluated the activity. Participants could identify with the situation of disadvantaged learners and empathize with the excluded while becoming more aware of their privileges and the need to bridge social differences. The question of equal chances and equal opportunities was made tangible and concrete. Participants become more aware of the need to improve the situation of learners in particular and societal groups in general. Participants evaluated this activity as very effective and useful in fostering self-reflection and teaching the complex theme of discrimination. Participants can strengthen their own competences and the competences of their learners through adapting this activity.

PART III

Reflection of my "contribution" to discrimination experiences (*group reflection of own unknowing contribution to discrimination and how to change it*).
Participants in groups discussed about:

1) stereotypes,
2) discrimination in social interaction contexts
3) unknowing participation in reproducing discrimination and exclusion

PART IV

This part focused on the application of the learnt anti-discrimination awareness in real life contexts of teaching. It included reflection of own class situation on the basis of the discrimination system identified by participants during part I:

Following activities were implemented:

1) Individual work / reflection which included participants' reflection and analysis of own teaching and school situation.
2) Exchange in groups.
(a) Selection / brief description of a "person" (a learner and the concrete contexts of discrimination, or stigma they encounter which could lead to exclusion in their educational achievement).
(b) Development of potential action strategies at the level of teacher, teaching, school, society.
(c) Presentation of results.

3) Summary and reflection of the work results in the plenum.

Connecting point 1 and 2 and 3

Point 1: Individual work / reflection included reflection and analysis of own teaching and school situation. Upon this basis, point 2 was introduced which included:

▪ Group reflection in which each individual vocational trainer/teacher identified an individual persona in their classroom and a fiction name.

- Presentation and discussion of participants' selected persona and scenario of discrimination. This presented opportunities for sharing experiences and perspectives.
- The working group decided for one "person" out of the discussed multiple scenarios and developed a mindmap with possible action strategies: This included development of potential action strategies at the levels of teacher, teaching, school, society.
- Point 3 included joint reflection of results from all the group reflections.
- Feedback was incorproarted into the modifictaion of the toolkit.

Module I: Pedagogical Background Information, Reflecting Discrimination, Stereotypes, Culture as a Dynamic Category, etc.

The teachers became more aware of the stereotypes against migrants and Roma. They also became more aware about the importance of preventing discrimination in schools. They were acquainted with the roles of assistants for Romani students (who work in the Slovene schools) and coordinators for Roma (who assist adult Roma in adult education and their integration in the wider community).

The teachers stated that they became more acquainted with the concept of integration and that integration is a win-win situation for migrants and the receiving society. They received new knowledge about multiculturalism and intercultural competencies as well. They learnt about the importance of pedagogical agreement between the migrant or Roma student and the school and about the role of schools in integration processes.

Module II: Inclusion of Roma

During the course we discussed about all the Modules:

- What they contain
- How they could be understood in our country context.

The participants were eager to find out new information about migrants and Roma people; they did not know almost anything about Roma people history during different periods of time, as well as about some aspects of their culture. We had power-point presentations containing specific information about migrants and Roma people and reflexive exercises.

We discussed about the impact of what participants had learnt on educational strategies and on how they can apply the learnt during the teaching process.

The participants were grouped in teams of 4-5 members, solved the reflexive exercises and were asked to discussed about them. They are expected to work on their own 4 hours a month, during 10 months together with their colleagues and students, and 1 hour a month, on the platform.

Many participants wrote that the content of the BLC seminar was interesting and will be useful in their future work with the students. They became more aware of the contents of the Predis project and the possible structure of the blended learning course

A document focusing about the situation of Roma only in Rumania does not make too much sense for the Austrian context. Most of the native Roma population was killed during WWII, and migration of Roma to Austria started in the 1960s from Former Yugoslavia. Roma from Rumania are a rather new phenomenon in Austria.

The extreme deterioration of the situation of the Roma in Romania (as well as other countries of Eastern Europe) due to racism and legal exclusion are provoking the current migration.

Roma counselling organizations report that they frequently come across cases where migrant Roma from Romania (and Hungary) older than 40 often do have formal education and had the experience of regular work, while the next generation (now parents) has no school experience and no experience on the labour market. This has very negative effects of the children.

Module III: Intercultrual Compentences and Conflict Management

Among the different methods to be practiced at schools, participants recommend sociodrama and methods of conflict resolution.

Multipliers and teachers shoud strengthen sensivity towards intercultural topics as a life-long process.

Teachers became more aware that it is important to take into consideration different levels in intercultural education: a student, a teacher, peers etc.

They think that one of the reasons that some migrant and Roma students leave schools too early lies also in the fact that they do not feel accepted in schools, therefore we need methods to solve these problems.

Module IV: Empowerment

In this module Participants appreciated empowerment through a focus on addressing Social Deprivation in Schools and Entrenching Diversity using Team Teaching

When teachers deal with the students in the depriveleged situations, positive action is needed. More attention of teachers must be paid to the learning diffuclties of the students. In order to manage diversity in classrooms, we need to cooperate with the teachers that have less experience with managing diversity in the classroom, we need to provide them enough new knowledge, so that we enable them to cope with the changes in societies and therefore also in learning environments.

Module V: Concrete Methods of Labour Market Integration

Participants handled the work related instruction.

Participants think they need to encourage students to write their CVs and to plan the development of their competencies.

Teachers became more aware of the importance to connect the students with future employers.

The awareness of teachers was raised that they need some other competencies beside those that are needed for the teaching of their subject. The teachers became more aware that they need to become acquainted with some parts of the biography and culture of students.

It was also important that multipliers need to raise more awareness among teachers that teachers need to upbring children not only parents, who are primary caregivers, and that they need to provide students also with the knowledge that they need for life and not only for school succeess.

Module VI: Support at the Transition to VET

In this module, knowledge of the ESL risk factors, Good Practices and Practical Strategies for Implementing Diversity Policies in the Schools and VET training Environments were appreciated:

One of the most important things was the exchange of the experience between the teachers and good practices of teaching migrants and Roma in both countries, as well as the presentations of case studies. The teachers learnt the main reasons for early school leaving of students. Related to that, they became more aware about the importance of creativity and individuality as important principles in school environment.

The teachers also valued some solutions, which were presented in order to be implemented in schools for the management of the diversity in classrooms. In their future work, the teachers will be more aware of the individual identities and needs of the students, therefore, individualization is an important principle for teaching. One of the ways to achieve the individualization is to use individualized personal learning plans for the students. The latter enable easier monitoring and planning of students' progress. Participants became more aware about the importance of motivating the students to progress and to plan their work.

Nevertheless, the opinion of the teachers is that in schools there are not enough teachers for the implementation of the individualization and therefore, it will be difficult to find and implement all the solutions needed without additional financial means.

The teachers became more aware of the importance of life-long learning. At the same time, they became more aware that each student possesses certain and different capabilities and faculties and that they need to discover this knowledge in students and to endeavour to make students aware of their knowledge and competencies.

Teachers became more aware about the importance of providing migrant students the opportunities for learning the language of the new society, immediately when they enrol in schools and later on, in this way they enable them easier integration not only in schools, but also in society.

3 Implementation of the Online BLC

GETTING STARTED

The total of 52 participants included teachers, VET trainers and representatives of migrants and Roma associations. The online implementation was inspired by Fichten's tested orientational guidelines for online distance Learning Programmes.[2] During the first phase, participants were supported by consortium partners to individually familiarize themselves with the structures of the learning environments and to get acquainted with the study materials. They were also supported by the consortium partners to individually work on some exercises, in order to find out how and in which teaching contexts they could apply the conveyed knowledge. This phase of individual and independent learning lasted between 10 – 12 weeks (compare Fichten 2004). The second phase consisted of a mixture between self-instructional learning and online interactions. The online interactions aimed to enable participants to share perspectives, exchange local and international experiences, clarify content issues and action strategies. As will be explained later, the participants positively evaluated and widely applied contents. However, the online interactions were not as intensive as originally envisioned due to busy schedules of participants, combined with the need for intensive self-study of the comprehensive concepts as well as the need to focus on the transfer of contents. The consortium continued to support participants through group discussions and individual mentoring.

TESTING, TRANSFER,
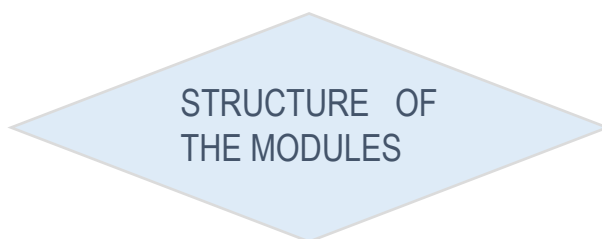EVALUATION &
MODIFICATION OF
CONTENTS
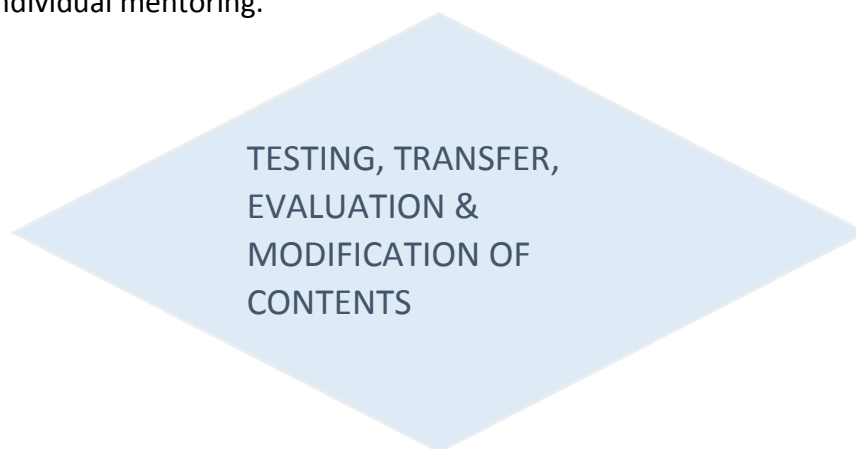
The contents developed by PREDIS underwent multiple testing and feedback loops. The consortium evaluated the toolkit in different stages before the inclassroom training.

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[2] Fichten is a leading educationist, See Fichten (2004).

Evaluation during the BLC was realized on two levels. ***First,*** during the online course, participants tested and evaluated the PREDIS course contents in light of their practical application relevance (*links to practice*). Course participants applied, modified and adjusted contents learnt during both the presence phase and the online phase to fit their different transfer settings. ***Second,*** course participants, provided evaluative feedback to the consortium, who incorporated it into the further modification of PREDIS modules[3]. At the beginning of the training, the modules were regularly revised in order to incorporate the reflections and evaluative feedback of participants. In addition, the platform was updated with supplementary reading materials. As training proceeded, the constant updating of texts interrupted the reading patterns of some participants. Subsequently, the revised contents were no longer uploaded on the training platform. Instead, the revisions were integrated in the handbook and in the toolkit which are the final products of the Blended Learning Course. Updates on supplementary reading materials were extensively reduced.

STRUCTURE OF
THE MODULES

Each module consisted of a theoretical and practical part. The applied contents and methods extensively reflected the state of the Art. For the transfer of key learned contents into everyday teaching and learning environments, activities were designed, which educationists could implement with their learners.

The modules offered participants a broad range of topics and in-depth coverage in order to:

(1) meet the diverse professional development needs of the heterogeneous teachers, trainers and practitioners. For example, educationists and practitioners who are relatively new in the field typically need more background information on topics covered;
(2) offer the participants the possibility for expanding professional development through self-instructional learning even after the online training has ended.

With regard to the structure, the modules combined: (a) self-instructional learning components (*independent-study by participants during and after Online BLC*), with (2) mentoring (*support and guidance through consortium partners*) and (3) transfer components (*for educationists' application during in classroom teaching*).

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[3] According to Fichten, in order to effectively improve professional competences, online learning courses for professional development must realize the integration of theory and practice. Several tasks are involved. Comprehensive contents on relevant topics have to be available and studied by participants. Without studying there is nothing to apply; participants assess the knowledge transmitted in light of its relevance for professional practice. They do this by partly using it and partly adapting it during the process (Fichten 2004.)

The discourse on educational disadvantage, risk factors and employment integration of youngsters is currently very fragmented. The concepts of the modules were assembled together from different scientific disciplines (*Pedagogy, Gender Studies and Migration Studies; Political Education*). Educationists and practitioners have been spared from undertaking the complex research work and the associated heavy workload. In addition to the modules, supplementary materials with contents and activities for further reading on relevant topics were assembled and uploaded on the training platform.

As stated above, a mentoring component was incorporated. In line with Fichten, the consortium partners assumed the role of mentors. Their tasks involved working with participants on the particulars of contents of the BLC texts, explaining complex concepts and clarifying questions of participants. Naturally, sometimes the mentoring exceeded the course material by showing further perspectives and working out connections to practice and their concretization[4]. The scope of contents was sometimes widened such that mentoring sessions came up with more materials and resources, information on the topic, and key actors/ possible cooperation partners in the sector, etc. Thus, according to Fichten, mentors of online programs assumed the role of facilitator of competences (Fichten 2004).

4   Evaluation of the Online BLC

EVALUATION RESULTS REGARDING CONTENTS AND TRANSFER

The online implementation of the BLC was challenging. However, the contents were very highly appreciated. Most of the participants (90%) applied the course contents in their professional practice. This section will first present the evaluation feedback on transfer of contents before discussing the implementation challenges.

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[4] Excluded and relevant topics were pointed out for example: resources for materials on Migrant and Roma associations, critique of current practice which excludes a focus on early childhood education as a primary site for ESL prevention and for diversity training during the most fertile social developmental phases for diversity, acceptance and tolerance learning; identity formation in social hierarchies and implications for ESL, etc.

Practical Relevance of Contents and Methods

Based on evaluative feedback from participants, it is possible to glider the concepts applied and evaluated by BLC participants during their teaching and learning environments into the following themes:

(1) Applying contents and exercises promoting anti-discrimination and anti-prejudice Awareness.
(2) Applying contents promoting awareness of structural parameters of disadvantaged youngsters.
(3) Applying contents promoting the employment integration of disadvantaged youngsters.
(4) Applying contents promoting safe and welcoming schools to actively prevent ESL.
(5) Applying general contents as mirrored in the summarized feedback.
(6) Identifying contents that need broadening (*Gaps*) and suggestions for improvement.

In what follows, the evaluative feedback under each clustered theme above is summarized and presented.

Module I:

Applying Concepts Promoting Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Prejudice Awareness in Teaching and Learning Contexts

Evaluative Feedback from the BLC Participants

I used the collection of comics '*What? Me? A racist?*' in February in my English class at higher vocational college with a group of 11 students. The purpose of the activity was to discuss the stereotypes and prejudices that surround and permeate our lives on more or less subconscious levels. The 11 students received a copy of a comic each, read it and then shared their stories in groups of 3-4. As a follow up activity, they created a list of the most pervasive discriminations in our school (*mental/physical disabilities, homophobia, prejudice against the overweight, foreigners, etc..*) and a list of concrete suggestions on how to alleviate the problems. My opinion is the comics is a very useful collection, because it uses short and concise stories to illustrate a large number of various types of discriminations. As readers, reporters and listeners, students could easily relate their experience of being victims ("*I didn't get the job because I'm a woman*") and perpetrators stereotypes("*Albanian immigrants refuse to learn Slovene*") . The wide array of discrimination cases helped students critically consider their environment and also their behaviour. Since this collection is available in a number of European languages, it can be used in a number of foreign language classes. Very nice and very useful.

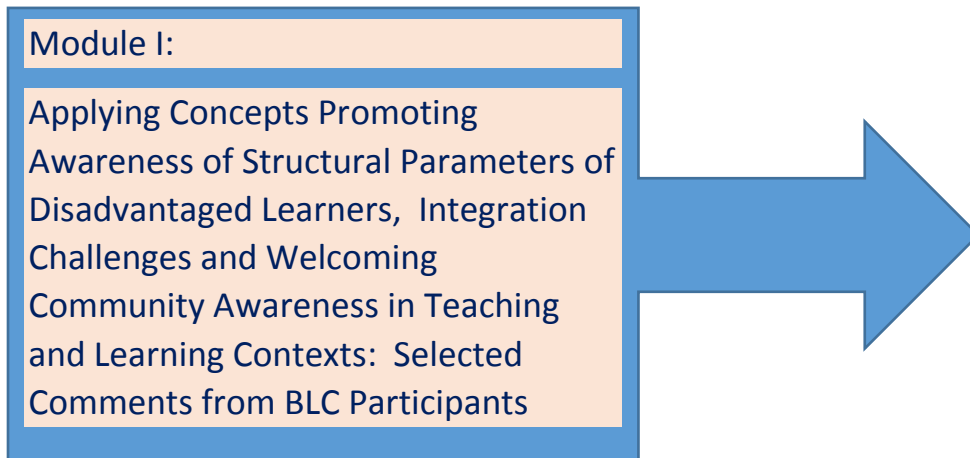**Particularly important for my practical work was …**

I realized that there are several types of discrimination. Today discrimination is less direct, more covered and sophisticated. We have to pay attention constantly on the perception of discriminatory behaviour. I discovered that sometimes with inadequate communication, we encourage prejudice unknowingly.

Particularly difficult to implement in real life is ……

Fighting against prejudice. Discrimination bases on stereotypes and prejudices. They surround us everywhere, from home to the public. It is very difficult to break them, first we have to notice them and then we have to react properly. In order to point out stereotypes and prejudices, I used some pages from the collection of comics 'What? Me? A racist?' in my lessons during replacement of my colleague in the classroom (*I am working as a teacher in a vocational and technical school)* and in my library (*I am also a school librarian*). I placed some pages at my working desk in library, so visitors couldn´t miss them. Everybody asked me, why those copies are laying around, so we began to talk about discrimination. I just want that students realise the existence of discrimination in our school and everyday life, so they could relate their experience with discriminatory behaviour.

In the future I will try ….

to point out every discriminatory behaviour. I prepared some questions about racism and discrimination cases in students life, I will try to find answers from students.

Module I:

Applying Concepts Promoting Awareness of Structural Parameters of Disadvantaged Learners, Integration Challenges and Welcoming Community Awareness in Teaching and Learning Contexts: Selected Comments from BLC Participants

Evaluative Feedback from BLC Participants

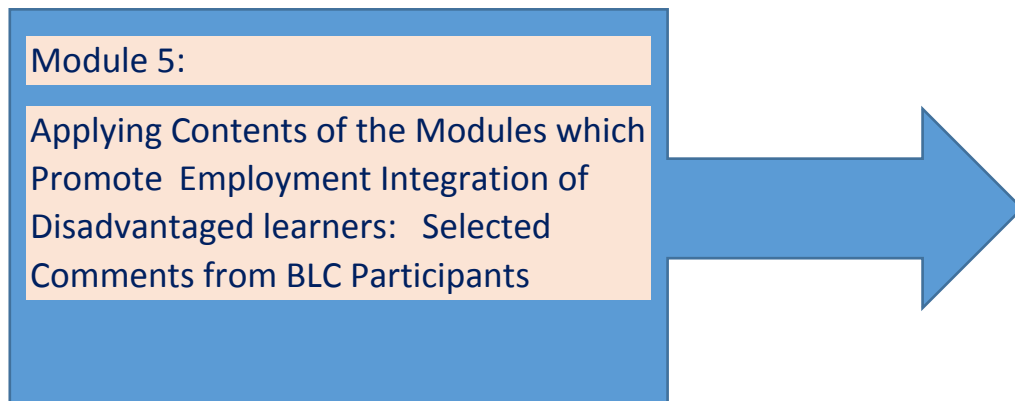**Particularly important for my practical work was** … recognizing migrant students' problems with integration in the new environment and culture and the examples of how to help them.

I learnt that all migrants have different problems with integration into new society and culture. Prior to the course, I thought that the main problem is new language, but I realized

that there is also the problem with new culture, making new friends, post-traumatical shock, they are away from their parents, friends, home.

Particularly difficult to implement in real life is …… dealing with other (discriminating) thinking people.

In the future I will try …. to transfer knowledge about early drop out and the diversity existing among friends and school mates to my students, to encourage them not to drop out of school and to help their friends with similar problems.

Module 5:

Applying Contents of the Modules which Promote Employment Integration of Disadvantaged learners: Selected Comments from BLC Participants
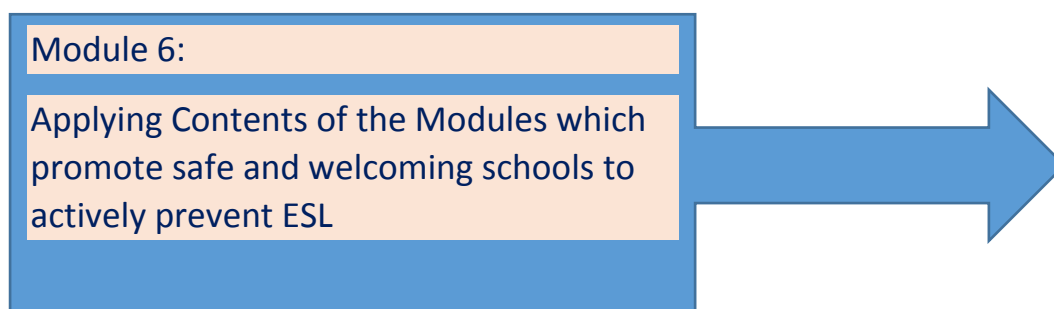
Evaluative Feedback from BLC Participants

- I used Crazy Job Interview as a lesson activity in teaching and learned that employment workshops are very stimulating and motivating for students. The activity dealt with how to present yourself in a job interview. Students enjoyed the activity and took it very seriously, because the game was very similar to a real life situation. Students began to critically think about their skills, professional knowledge and career. This activity increases options for pupils at the labor market – (Module 5).

- **Particularly important for my practical work** is work-based learning and work-based language learning (…). The ECVT Online tools for validation institutions and for recognizing youngsters' qualification are very useful. Many migrant youngsters I deal with are facing the problems and questions of how to have qualifications recognized and how to prove that they already have worked in some areas and do not have to repeat studies or training for many years. Youngster were particularly happy to find online information on how to develop application documents and elaborate their CVS through the EURES & EUROPASS. **In future, I will try to use the** career counselling exercises and (…) ECVT, EURES & EUROPASS to provide information to youngsters.

- **Particularly important for my practical work** is how to link youngsters to internships. (….). The practical tips for helping youngsters are very useful for my everyday work. *Particularly useful but difficult to implement in everyday teaching is stakeholder*

engagement. I appreciate the practical tips of working with VET leadership and school leadership to organize stakeholder engagement. ***In the future I will try to*** initiate and organize with my colleagues a stakeholder engagement approach. I will also try to incorporate work-related concepts in curricular.

▪ I had a lesson 'The job - a gold bracelet' during my counselling class at XI C grade, where there are 31 students and 5 of them are Roma students-girls. I gave them a survey related to discrimination (gender, origin, minority) in finding a job. This survey showed that 8 of the students answered that for certain jobs, some employers make a difference related to people's ethnicity. The next counselling class, I invited a representative of Buzau County Employment Agency who offered counselling to the students related to how they should behave in participating in a job interview, this way they improved their skills in writing a good CV and their communicative skills. Thus, they increased their chances in finding a job.

▪ Teacher 2 – teacher of technological subject: At one of my counselling lesson at XI A grade, made up of 28 students from whom 3 of them are Roma students - all of them girls, I invited a very successful woman of Roma origin who works at Buzau Prefecture, The European Business and International Relations Compartment, who shared from her experience accumulated during the years when she was a high school girl and a student of Roma origin and then as an employee of Roma origin. She demonstrated, if you work hard, you can succeed.

Evaluative Feedback from BLC Participants

Module 6:

Applying Contents of the Modules which promote safe and welcoming schools to actively prevent ESL

Theme I: Tackling and Preventing Bullying in Schools and Training Environments

1. **I think this strategy against bullying has all the characteristics to be effective. In particular I have appreciated the following aspects:**
   - the fact that it is systematic, involving many actors and not only the learner affected or "the protagonist"
   - the use of an appreciative approach not only with the learner affected by bullying but also with "the protagonist"

- the fact that everything starts from the attempt of establishing a trust relationship with the learner affected by bullying
- the fact of giving the supportive group the responsibility of improving the situation within the class
- I have also appreciated the existence of a follow up phase, during which it is possible even to realize that a more strong approach is needed.

2. Particularly important for my practical work are practical tools for handling bullying:

I introduced the No-blame Approach and the Farsta Methods to a group of migrants who work with youth and participate in self-organization activities. They liked these strategies very much and were very eager to apply them and to train other youth leaders and their migrants communities in how to use these approaches.

Theme II: Implementing the Ecological School Approach

Particularly important for my practical work is the Whole School Approach

I am a representative of a migration association. I used your whole school approach which seeks to engage parents in the schools. I explained it to a migrant parent whose child is now in kindergarten. In the Pre-kindergarten, the staff used to make all kids in her child's class count from 1-10 every morning. In Kindergarten, this stopped. After some time, the migrant parent noticed that her child started to forget how to count. The parent worked on this at home but I also encouraged her to bring it to the attention of the Kindergarten teachers that in pre-kindergarten, children were made to count and that Kindergarten kids could benefit from counting if it is continued in kindergarten. The kindergarten teachers picked up on the practice. It is really important to continue support from one school level to another.

ESL causes can start in early childhood years. During kindergarten, a migrant parent's child liked to play building castles with wooden blocks. A younger child would frequently interrupt the game by destroying the castle her child built. The kindergarten mixes ages. The parent noticed that her child did not like to play castles anymore. After some time, she did not want to go to kindergarten. I encouraged the parent to talk with the kindergarten teachers about the situation. The kindergarten teachers intervened by always picking up the younger toddler before she could destroy the castle and encouraged the other child to play, which solved the whole problem.

In future I will try to use the whole school approach more and encourage migrant parents to do the same.

General Application of Contents of the Modules

Summary of the General Evaluative Feedback from BLC Participants

- Some of the activities are stimulating and can be applied in the classes.

- For sure this kind of modules activates the discussion on important and actual themes and gives the opportunity to observe the situations and to confront your own attitudes and behaviours with other people.
- The contents on preventing violence and bullying in class and the activities are very essential and can be applied to change the classroom and school environments.
- It made me reflect and it promoted an higher awareness of different problems.
- I work in a school with a high rate of drop out, therefore the reflection on these topics has been very useful.
- Some parts of the modules are important because they can make active and responsible students.
- The contents meet needs which are really important within the classes.
- These contents are good work ideas.
- They stimulate the awareness and the reflections by promoting discussions among peers and among students and adults
- They stimulate an interaction among different subjects and environments, which is important.
- They stimulate self-awareness.
- It seemed to me a very nice project!
- It stimulates the reflection and helps the awareness of implicit mechanisms (sometimes not clear) but which exist.
- It can effectively help to reduce early school leaving. It stimulates an active citizenship, it gives value to talents.
- It was an important opportunity of comparison.
- The contents related to prejudices and stereotypes are very important.
- There are reflections on very important themes and it gives attention on elements of discrimination typical of our society.
- I would use the single activities to integrate other paths.
- They stimulated personal thoughts; they promoted a discussion among students; they made professors observe the students from a different perspective.
- Knowing about the historical exclusion of Roma helped a lot in empathy, overcoming prejudices and thinking twice about their current situation and ongoing discrimination.
- Work-based learning and work-based language learning topics, activities and online resources are (…) concrete tools to handle in real situations.

Some Identified Gaps and Selected Suggestions for Content

Most of the evaluative feedback from the BLC participants has been incorporated in the modules. The comments below re-echo some of these comments:

- I missed some institutionalized spaces of discussion for teachers about the treated themes. It could promote the creation of interdisciplinary education paths.

- Biases, personality, learn motivation and/or-de-motivation develop in pre-school and school. This means including approaches that form the learning habits of children in school and preschool (from 3 years of age).
- Prevention against VET early disengagement is crucial. Elementary school should be seen as the primary site for intervening. For Roma youngsters, for example, it is often too late to start with interventions during vocational training when girls are already set in marriage pathways.
- Caravan schools should be reintroduced in order to take the schools to the Roma communities.
- Populations with a migration/minority background and the population of the majority should have an open and honest discussion regarding what needs to be done from both sides to foster smooth integration and participation. There should be a two-way genuine approach. Expectations regarding hard work and discipline should be able to be explained and understood by migrants and Roma just as issues of discrimination and exclusion must be acknowledged and addressed by the society of the majority.
- Esthetic issue: whitening chemicals – should be raised as an issue of discrimination / awareness raising – important for youngsters who want to be accepted.
- Parents' working situation! – Children stay up until late.

Implementation Challenges

The BLC online implementation process was challenging and poorer rated than the BLC contents. The online course itself was related as 3 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 demonstrating the highest value. The reasons are mainly as follows:

Challenge 1: The BLC originally aimed at developing comprehensive concepts. However in praxis this was challenging: At the beginning, many online participants considered the modules as too comprehensive. However, there were also some who considered the modules as not comprehensive enough. Most teachers and trainers preferred more concise information and more exercises i.e. basic texts and exercises due to the limited time.

Problem Resolution Strategies:

Consortium partners resolved the challenge by developing summaries and microsummaries of the modules which presented key concepts. As already mentioned, consortium partners assumed the role of mentors and worked with participants on particulars of contents of the texts, explained complex concepts and clarified questions of participants. In addition, consortium partners supported participants in navigating the information and working out contents for transfer as well as giving advice during the learning process [5].

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[5] Compare Fichten (2004).

Challenge 2: Especially at the beginning, the platform functions were sometimes confusing.

Problem Resolution Strategies: This barrier was leveraged through the PREDIS platform administration support. In addition, PREDIS consortium partners walked participants through the different steps of accessing the platform and using the different functions (*emails, chats*), identifying files and contents (*Modules, Handouts, Texts, Extra Reading Material*).

Challenge 3: Due to the high working level of teachers, some participants found online interactions as increasing the burden of balancing daily work demands with online information (*own work emails and the BLC chat communication*).

Problem Resolution Strategies: Periods of autonomous offline learning supported by consortium mentors were organized. This had the further advantage of ensuring that teachers could learn on their own pace. The need to respond to others comments especially during phases of familiarising with materials and exercises, was experienced by some participants as interrupting. Fichten supports this solution. Fichten has pointed out that the objectives of online training courses are mostly realized in situations, in which participants can organize in a relatively autonomous manner. It is essential to prevent difficulties in interaction which can accrue due to institutional obstacles like clinging to routines such as inflexible courses of work (Fichten 2004: 4). (see Bloh in Wolfgang Fichten & Olaf Zawacki-Richter: 2004)

Evaluative Feedback from BLC Participants Regarding the Implementation

The following comments from participants echo some of the difficulties described above and the impacts of some of the measures undertaken by the consortium to alleviate them:

'The platform was originally difficult to access and the user functions were not easy to recognize. We appreciate that the BLC organizers responded. We also appreciate the broad range of choice of materials for training and the fact that the BLC organizers supported us to navigate the documents on the platforms'.

'During my participation in the course, I learned a lot of new things about migrating, migrations, the whole process of migration. All materials was useful, but there was too much information. So I am very glad that *our mentor from the consortium* helped us with all modules and activities'.

Conclusive Summary

The contents were on the average very highly appreciated. Teachers have evaluated contents in BLC as useful, interesting and informative. Teachers have estimated that they gained new knowledge from both the course manual of the BLC modules and the lessons activities. They

have stated that they will try to continue to use the acquired knowledge about early school leaving and diversity of identities in their work with students. Some of them have mentioned that they will also attempt to spread the belief that cultural, social and linguistic diversity can enrich school stuff and students. Most of them have noted they will also use more activities and workshops in the classroom which mirror and confront real life situations.

5   Literature

- Wolfgang Fichten & Olaf Zawacki-Richter (2004): Learning communities in an online course on "psycho-social aspects in nursing" - a community of practice? In: U. Bernath & A. Szücs (Eds.). Supporting the Learner in Distance Education and E-Learning, Proceedings of the Third EDEN Research Workshop, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany, March 4 - 6, (pp. 231 - 239). Oldenburg: Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg.