

"Game based learning to validate pre-employment skills and to foster digital competence of low skilled and marginalized students to foster better transition to the labour market"

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WORK PACKAGE 4 LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

EXPLOITABILITY REPORT

Target groups: project partners, administrative staff, teachers, future exploiters of the EMPLOGAME deliverables

Dissemination level: public



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1. The purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to show the results of the teachers' and counsellors' interventions at the end of the realization of the "Game based learning to validate pre-employment skills and to foster digital competence of low skilled and marginalized students to foster better transition to the labour market" project under Erasmus+ programme, School education, KA220. It is aiming to provide additional outcomes and "lessons learnt" from the pre-employment programme implementation, which will be helpful sustainability action for other teachers and career counsellors, who will use the handbook and apply the programme beyond the project realisation.

2. Scope of the implementation of the Pre-employment programme

The pre-employment programme was designed to equip marginalized students with the necessary skills and knowledge to enter the workforce confidently. The entire deliverable is part of Result 7 of the EMPLOGAME project and can be found online via: <https://emplogame.eu/results/> Over the course of fifteen sessions, marginalised students engaged in a variety of activities and discussions aimed at enhancing their employability. The term "marginalised students" refers to a diverse group of individuals who face various forms of social, economic, or educational exclusion.

1. Socio-economic background: Low-income families (Roma community / Latin America communities): Students from families with limited financial resources lacking from access to quality education, extracurricular activities, and essential learning materials and dedicated training towards labour market inclusion and pre-employment preparation.

2. Ethnic and cultural minorities: Indigenous students which face cultural barriers, discrimination, and with a lack of culturally relevant educational materials and pre-employment support including immigrants and refugee students: These students encounter language barriers, cultural differences, and challenges related to acceptance on their strengths by potential employers.

3. Disability and special educational needs:

a) Physical disabilities: Students with physical impairments, which face architectural barriers in school infrastructure and limited access to assistive technologies.

b) Learning disabilities: Students with dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, Autism spectrum disorders (mild conditions), ADHD, or other learning disabilities may require specialized teaching methods and accommodations.

Both groups have limited access to the labour market upon graduation, and both are lacking from dedicated interventions and training on pre-employment support and job skills preparation.

Here are the **key takeaways** from each step of the programme, which came as a conclusion from the feedback gathered from 237 teachers, who have implemented the pre-employment programme in Spain, Bulgaria and Turkiye:

Step One: The Group and Me

Through icebreaker activities and group discussions, participants established strong bonds and developed a supportive community. They learned to communicate openly and listen actively, which fostered a collaborative environment conducive to learning and growth.

Step Two: Labour Market Realities

Students gained valuable insights into the current job market, identifying key industries and sectors with potential opportunities. They understood the importance of adaptability and continuous learning, enabling them to better align their skills with market demands.

Step Three: The Perfect Job

By exploring their interests, values, and strengths, participants defined their ideal career paths. They utilized tools like the Strong Interest Inventory and conducted career exploration activities, developing strategies to achieve their aspirations.

Step Four: Self-Awareness

Students enhanced their self-understanding through personality assessments and feedback sessions. They identified their strengths and areas for development, creating personal development plans to improve continuously.

Step Five: Career Resources

Participants were introduced to various career resources, both online and offline, and learned how to use them effectively for job searching and networking. They compiled lists of preferred resources and outlined how they planned to utilize them.

Step Six: Identifying Jobs and the Tools to Do Them

Students developed skills for identifying suitable job openings and tailoring applications to specific job requirements. They practiced networking techniques and began applying for relevant positions, gaining practical experience in the job search process.

Step Seven: Communication Skills and Students' Initial Presentations

Participants improved their verbal and written communication abilities through workshops and presentation practice. They delivered impactful presentations and received constructive feedback, boosting their confidence in public speaking and conveying clear messages.

Step Eight: Looking for Work is Harder Than Working!

Students recognized the challenges of the job search process and developed resilience and perseverance. They implemented effective coping mechanisms and created personal action plans for overcoming obstacles and staying motivated.

Step Nine: Myth Busters – The Reality of Working as Disadvantaged Youth (Session for Students with Disabilities)

For students with disabilities, this session debunked common myths and highlighted the realities and opportunities available. Participants shared success stories and developed advocacy strategies to assert their rights and navigate workplace accommodations.

Step Ten: How and When to Disclose Disability in the Job Search Process (Session for Students with Disabilities)

Students with disabilities learned about the legal aspects of disclosing their conditions and determined the appropriate timing for doing so. They prepared for potential reactions and responses, creating personal disclosure plans.

Step Eleven: The Perfect Worker

Participants explored the qualities and behaviours of exceptional employees, developing habits and practices aligned with these traits. They fostered a positive work ethic and attitude, becoming more attractive candidates for employers.

Step Twelve: The Trail

Students navigated mock interviews and received feedback, refining their interviewing skills and increasing their chances of securing employment. They also worked on resume writing and job application strategies, honing their ability to present themselves professionally.

Step Thirteen: What You See Is What You Get – It's All in the Presentation!

Participants focused on the importance of first impressions and polished their presentation skills. They learned how to dress appropriately, maintain eye contact, and convey enthusiasm, leaving a lasting positive impact on potential employers.

Step Fourteen: It's Showtime... An Interview Performance

Students put their newly acquired skills to the test in simulated interviews, receiving feedback and fine-tuning their performance. They gained confidence in showcasing their qualifications and answering challenging questions.

Step Fifteen: Mock Interview Feedback and Final Thoughts

After completing the program, participants reflected on their progress and discussed their readiness for the job market. They expressed increased confidence in their abilities and a clearer vision for their future careers.

In conclusion, the pre-employment program significantly enhanced the employability of marginalized students by equipping them with essential skills, knowledge, and confidence. Through a series of interactive sessions and practical exercises, participants overcame barriers and emerged as competitive candidates ready to excel in their chosen fields.

3. Challenges and possible mitigation strategies

Based on the collected feedback from 237 teachers, who implemented the pre-employment programme in Spain, Bulgarian and Turkiye, we would like to share with potential interested teachers or other professionals, about challenges, which have been identified during the implementation process as well as possible mitigation strategies, which have been elaborated by these teachers. These lessons learnt have only recommendable nature and should not be used as predefined recipes, because always it depends on the individual characteristics of the involved marginalised group of students as well as local circumstances.

Step One: The Group and Me

Challenges:

1. **Resistance to Participation:** Some students may initially resist engaging in group activities due to shyness or discomfort.
2. **Lack of Trust:** Building trust within the group can be difficult, especially if participants have had negative past experiences.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Icebreakers:** Begin with fun, non-threatening icebreaker activities to ease participants into the group dynamic.
2. **Facilitation:** Ensure a skilled facilitator who can guide discussions and create a safe space for sharing.
3. **Confidentiality:** Emphasize confidentiality and respect to foster trust among participants.

Step Two: Labour Market Realities

Challenges:

1. **Overwhelming Information:** Students may feel overwhelmed by the amount of information presented about the job market.
2. **Negative Perceptions:** Preconceived notions about certain industries or roles might hinder students' willingness to explore new opportunities.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Simplified Presentations:** Break down complex information into digestible segments.

2. **Positive Framing:** Focus on the positive aspects of various industries and highlight success stories.
3. **Interactive Learning:** Use interactive tools and activities to engage participants and reinforce learning.

Step Three: The Perfect Job

Challenges:

1. **Uncertainty About Interests:** Students may struggle to identify their true interests and passions.
2. **Limited Exposure:** Lack of exposure to diverse career options can restrict their ability to envision their ideal job.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Exploration Activities:** Conduct career exploration activities, such as job shadowing or informational interviews.
2. **Mentorship:** Pair students with mentors who can offer guidance and share personal experiences.
3. **Assessment Tools:** Utilize interest inventories and aptitude tests to help clarify preferences.

Step Four: Self-Awareness

Challenges:

1. **Defensive Reactions:** Students may become defensive when discussing their weaknesses or areas for improvement.
2. **Low Self-Esteem:** Negative self-perceptions can hinder honest self-assessment.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Constructive Feedback:** Provide feedback in a supportive and constructive manner.
2. **Peer Support:** Encourage peer feedback sessions to promote a culture of mutual support and growth.
3. **Confidence Building:** Incorporate activities that boost self-esteem and celebrate individual strengths.

Step Five: Career Resources

Challenges:

1. **Information Overload:** Navigating numerous career resources can be overwhelming.
2. **Access Barriers:** Limited access to technology or resources can hinder effective utilization.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Resource Tours:** Organize visits to local libraries, career centers, and employment agencies to demonstrate resource usage.
2. **Digital Literacy Training:** Provide basic digital literacy training to ensure all students can effectively use online resources.
3. **Personalized Lists:** Help students create personalized lists of preferred resources tailored to their needs.

Step Six: Identifying Jobs and the Tools to Do Them

Challenges:

1. **Competition:** High competition for entry-level positions can discourage students.
2. **Skill Gaps:** Insufficient skills or experience may limit job prospects.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Targeted Applications:** Teach students how to target specific job openings that align with their skills and interests.
2. **Skill Development:** Offer additional training or workshops to bridge skill gaps and enhance employability.
3. **Networking Opportunities:** Facilitate networking events or introduce students to professionals in their desired fields.

Step Seven: Communication Skills and Students' Initial Presentations

Challenges:

1. **Public Speaking Anxiety:** Fear of public speaking can inhibit effective communication.
2. **Unclear Messaging:** Difficulty articulating ideas clearly and concisely.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Practice Sessions:** Provide ample opportunities for practice presentations and offer constructive feedback.
2. **Anxiety Management:** Teach relaxation techniques and strategies for managing stage fright.
3. **Clarity Exercises:** Conduct exercises to refine message clarity and conciseness.

Step Eight: Looking for Work is Harder Than Working!

Challenges:

1. **Discouragement:** Prolonged job searches can lead to discouragement and loss of motivation.
2. **Burnout:** The emotional toll of repeated rejections can cause burnout.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Resilience Training:** Teach resilience-building techniques to cope with setbacks.
2. **Support Groups:** Create support groups where participants can share experiences and offer encouragement.
3. **Goal Setting:** Encourage regular goal setting and tracking to maintain focus and motivation.

Step Nine: Myth Busters – The Reality of Working as Disadvantaged Youth (Session for Students with Disabilities)

Challenges:

1. **Internalized Biases:** Students may hold onto negative beliefs about their own capabilities.
2. **Fear of Discrimination:** Concerns about facing discrimination in the workplace can deter job seeking.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Role Models:** Introduce successful professionals with disabilities to inspire and motivate participants.
2. **Bias Awareness:** Conduct sessions to raise awareness about unconscious bias and its impact.
3. **Empowerment Workshops:** Equip students with strategies for asserting their rights and advocating for themselves.

Step Ten: How and When to Disclose Disability in the Job Search Process (Session for Students with Disabilities)

Challenges:

1. **Timing Uncertainty:** Determining the optimal time to disclose a disability can be challenging.
2. **Potential Stigma:** Fear of being stigmatized or discriminated against after disclosure.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Legal Education:** Provide comprehensive education on disability rights and legal protections.
2. **Scenario Planning:** Practice various disclosure scenarios to build confidence and preparedness.
3. **Mock Interviews:** Conduct mock interviews to simulate disclosure conversations and refine responses.

Step Eleven: The Perfect Worker

Challenges:

1. **Habit Formation:** Developing new habits and practices can be difficult.
2. **Maintaining Motivation:** Sustaining a positive work ethic over time requires ongoing effort.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Accountability Partners:** Assign accountability partners to help track progress and provide support.
2. **Regular Check-ins:** Schedule regular check-ins to monitor habit formation and adjust strategies as needed.
3. **Incentives:** Set up reward systems to incentivize consistent positive behavior.

Step Twelve: The Trail

Challenges:

1. **Interview Nerves:** Anxiety about performing well in interviews can hinder success.
2. **Feedback Processing:** Difficulty processing and implementing feedback constructively.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Mock Interviews:** Conduct multiple mock interviews to familiarize students with the process and reduce anxiety.
2. **Feedback Analysis:** Teach techniques for analyzing and integrating feedback into future performances.
3. **Post-Interview Reflection:** Encourage post-interview reflection to identify areas for improvement.

Step Thirteen: What You See Is What You Get – It's All in the Presentation!

Challenges:

1. **First Impressions:** Making a strong first impression can be challenging, especially for introverted students.
2. **Non-Verbal Communication:** Difficulty mastering non-verbal cues like body language and eye contact.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Dress Rehearsals:** Conduct dress rehearsals to practice appropriate attire and grooming.
2. **Body Language Training:** Provide training on effective non-verbal communication techniques.

3. **Mirror Practice:** Encourage students to practice in front of mirrors to observe and correct their body language.

Step Fourteen: It's Showtime... An Interview Performance

Challenges:

1. **Performance Anxiety:** High levels of anxiety can negatively impact interview performance.
2. **Question Preparedness:** Struggling to answer unexpected or challenging questions.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Breathing Exercises:** Teach breathing exercises and relaxation techniques to manage anxiety.
2. **Common Question Practice:** Compile a list of common interview questions and practice answering them thoroughly.
3. **STAR Method:** Train students to use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure their responses.

Step Fifteen: Mock Interview Feedback and Final Thoughts

Challenges:

1. **Processing Feedback:** Absorbing and acting upon extensive feedback can be overwhelming.
2. **Finalizing Preparations:** Ensuring all preparations are complete before entering the job market.

Mitigation Strategies:

1. **Prioritization:** Help students prioritize feedback and focus on high-impact areas for improvement.
2. **Action Plans:** Develop action plans to implement feedback and track progress.
3. **Checklists:** Provide checklists to ensure all necessary preparations are completed before job searching begins.

By anticipating these challenges and implementing the suggested mitigation strategies, the pre-employment program can effectively address the unique needs of marginalized students, empowering them to overcome obstacles and succeed in their career journeys.

4. Conclusions

The pre-employment programme for marginalized students demonstrated significant effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by participants. By incorporating targeted interventions and support mechanisms, the programme achieved the following key outcomes:

Enhanced Group Dynamics and Trust Building

- **Conclusion:** Through carefully structured icebreaker activities and facilitated discussions, participants built strong bonds and established a supportive community. This foundation of trust enabled open communication and collaboration, fostering a positive learning environment.

Improved Labor Market Awareness

- **Conclusion:** Students gained valuable insights into the current job market, identifying key industries and sectors with potential opportunities. They understood the importance of adaptability and continuous learning, allowing them to better align their skills with market demands.

Clearer Career Paths

- **Conclusion:** By exploring their interests, values, and strengths, participants defined their ideal career paths. Utilizing tools like the Strong Interest Inventory and conducting career exploration activities, they developed strategies to achieve their aspirations.

Heightened Self-Awareness

- **Conclusion:** Students enhanced their self-understanding through personality assessments and feedback sessions. They identified their strengths and areas for development, creating personal development plans to improve continuously.

Effective Utilization of Career Resources

- **Conclusion:** Participants were introduced to various career resources, both online and offline, and learned how to use them effectively for job searching and networking. They compiled lists of preferred resources and outlined how they planned to utilize them.

Successful Job Application Strategies

- **Conclusion:** Students developed skills for identifying suitable job openings and tailoring applications to specific job requirements. They practiced networking techniques and began applying for relevant positions, gaining practical experience in the job search process.

Refined Communication Skills

- **Conclusion:** Through workshops and presentation practice, participants improved their verbal and written communication abilities. They delivered impactful presentations and received constructive feedback, boosting their confidence in public speaking and conveying clear messages.

Resilience and Perseverance

- **Conclusion:** Recognizing the challenges of the job search process, students developed resilience and perseverance. They implemented effective coping mechanisms and created personal action plans for overcoming obstacles and staying motivated.

Debunking Myths and Advocacy Skills

- **Conclusion:** For students with disabilities, the program debunked common myths and highlighted the realities and opportunities available. Participants shared success stories and developed advocacy strategies to assert their rights and navigate workplace accommodations.

Strategic Disclosure of Disabilities

- **Conclusion:** Students with disabilities learned about the legal aspects of disclosing their conditions and determined the appropriate timing for doing so. They prepared for potential reactions and responses, creating personal disclosure plans.

Positive Work Ethic and Attitude

- **Conclusion:** Participants explored the qualities and behaviors of exceptional employees, developing habits and practices aligned with these traits. They fostered a positive work ethic and attitude, becoming more attractive candidates for employers.

Polished Interview Skills

- **Conclusion:** Students navigated mock interviews and received feedback, refining their interviewing skills and increasing their chances of securing employment. They also worked on resume writing and job application strategies, honing their ability to present themselves professionally.

First Impression Mastery

- **Conclusion:** Focusing on the importance of first impressions, participants polished their presentation skills. They learned how to dress appropriately, maintain eye contact, and convey enthusiasm, leaving a lasting positive impact on potential employers.

Confident Interview Performance

- **Conclusion:** Putting their newly acquired skills to the test in simulated interviews, students received feedback and fine-tuned their performance. They gained confidence in showcasing their qualifications and answering challenging questions.

Comprehensive Feedback Integration

- **Conclusion:** After completing the program, participants reflected on their progress and discussed their readiness for the job market. They expressed increased confidence in their abilities and a clearer vision for their future careers.

Overall Impact

From the piloting results, we may conclude that students who have been the main stakeholders in this work package, definitely improved their pre-employment job skills and their readiness to enter the labour market in Spain, Bulgaria and Turkiye. There are evidences on their improved self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation and believes in the success as well as improved results of the school intervention, which prevented potential dropout from the school systems. The blended nature of the training, combining online and offline activities, was appreciated by participants. This flexibility catered to diverse learning styles and schedules, making the training more accessible and engaging. Interactive elements and gamified components-maintained participants' interest and motivation throughout the training.

The pre-employment programme significantly enhanced the employability of marginalized students by equipping them with essential skills, knowledge, and confidence. Through a series of interactive sessions and practical exercises, participants overcame barriers and emerged as competitive candidates ready to excel in their chosen fields. The program not only addressed immediate job search challenges but also instilled long-term strategies for personal and professional growth, ensuring sustainable success in the workforce.