



Concept note

105: Methodology for individual learning and career pathways, supported by peers or buddies

www.symfos.eu



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Concept note

IO5: Methodology for individual learning and career pathways, supported by peers or buddies

Final version
EN



Title:	<i>SymfoS Peer Buddy System– Concept note</i>
Intellectual Output – IO 5	<i>Methodology for individual learning and career pathways, supported by peers or buddies</i>
Description:	<p>This IO will be used for train the trainer issues as well as a tool for develop individual learning and career pathways. It will be contextualized in National Education and Career guidance system for connectivity to existing tools and approaches already used by VET-Provider and Career guidance officer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This IO will be informed by IO2 and IO4 and from previous learning in this area. 2. Design and adaption of the symbol tools will inform the development of processes by which practitioners and clients can work together to identify real learning from the approach and which will inform the development career pathways for clients. 3. Development of a survey where partner needs and contexts can be identified so as to ensure the implementation of the Symbols tools will be relevant to each partner’s context. 4. Review of Career Guidance methods and processes, including quality assurance in guidance and how the Symbols tools and approach can contribute to quality driven guidance particularly for clients who are disadvantaged in the labour market. 5. Use of Implementation Science principles in identifying the ‘best approach’ to implementation in each partner context. 6. Peer buddy system to be developed to support the implementation of learning and career pathways. This system will aim to have impact on the social capital of disadvantaged job seekers (which can often be quite weak particularly if the young person comes from a jobless household, or from a community where there are high levels of unemployment). The aim will be to support the individual to build their Social Network though the support of peer buddies. 7. A continuous improvement process (based on EQAVET) will enable the methodology to be fine tuned and will inform sustainable Implementation (IO7)
Partner organisation:	<i>Ballymun Job Centre</i>
Researcher(s) responsible for filling in this document:	<i>Ruth Baker</i>
Due date:	<i>31/03/2018</i>
Language:	<i>EN, ES, IT, DE</i>

Table of Contents

SymfoS Peer Buddy Toolkit.....	3
Toolkit Development	4
SymfoS Peer Buddy Framework	5
Evaluating Your Peer Buddy System.....	7
SymfoS Peer Buddy Concepts.....	10
Concept from Ballymun Job Centre, Ireland	11
Concept from Asociación Caminos, Spain	15
Concept from Sozialwerk Dürener Christen, Germany	23
Concept from CESIE, Italy	25
Concept from ZeMiT, Austria	29
Learnings from concept piloting.....	32

SymfoS Peer Buddy Toolkit

The methodologies for a Peer Buddy system developed within the SymfoS project is aiming to utilize the strong support that can be gained within a peer relationship to strengthen the link to employment and training pathways for young people. In any walk of life your peers have the capability of providing insight and support that those removed from your inner circle may be unable to offer. Peers provide links to other networks and community supports that professionals will not always have access to. This type of informal networking can supplement the traditional professional guidance services that young people access, creating an increasingly holistic approach to professional networking.

The SymfoS Peer Buddy Framework incorporates elements of group and individual peer coaching, building on the curriculum of counselling scenarios; basic clearing, planning road map, life road map, exploring the island of emotions and exploration of inner images. Any peer group requires trust and openness in order to support one another. The SymfoS Peer Buddy Framework is designed to occur after a group of young people have been guided through the full SymfoS curriculum as a group. This time together will allow the group to bond and grow trustful of one another, garnering the bond required for trusted peer support.

The Peer Buddy Framework seeks to provide group members with support to complete their training or employment action plans developed throughout the SymfoS model. The methodologies developed a practical step in the guidance process using a more holistic approach of peer support, in keeping with the SymfoS ethos.

Toolkit Development

Instead of developing a one size fits all Peer Buddy System, the SymfoS partnership have created the framework of best practice for Peer Buddy Systems along with 5 concept notes, all brought together in this toolkit. Organisations interact with groups of young people in different ways and indeed young people in different contexts have different needs. Creating a framework of best practice allows an organisation to create a peer buddy system to meet the needs of their young people after interacting with them through the SymfoS curriculum. The framework outlines the key aspects that should be included in all Peer Buddy Systems to allow the young people to benefit from the experience and organisations should ensure each element is incorporated into their own model.

The development process began with Ballymun Job Centre creating a framework for the Peer Buddy System within which the best practice elements for a Peer Buddy System are outlined. These were created in conjunction with career guidance officers who have significant levels of experience and expertise working in group settings with clients.

Each partner then created their own concept for a Peer Buddy System based on this framework. Each concept was piloted and feedback given on areas for improvement. The adaptability of the framework allows the partners to adjust the concepts as necessary to suit the needs of their clients. These 5 concepts of the Peer Buddy Model which incorporate all of these elements of best practice can be used if they suit the needs of a group of young people. Alternatively an organisation can develop their own concept from the framework.

SymfoS Peer Buddy Framework

The peer buddy framework seeks to provide group members with support to complete their training or employment action plans developed throughout the SymfoS model. The elements of best practice to facilitate this are outlined below:

- **Common feature should unite the group:** peer buddy systems allow a range of young people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to come together to support one another with their goals. Indeed the success of many groups relies on this diversity as young people learn about different experiences from their peers. However, in order for the group to have some sense of coherence there should be a common theme which the peers focus on e.g. employment prospects. This allows the peers to have a focus while also creating safe boundaries of what areas they are expected to support one another with.
- **Support from a practitioner should always be available:** while young people are great supports to one another through peer buddy systems there must be a recognition that professional support may be needed at times. Guidelines should be established with the peer group about the availability of practitioners to support their peer interactions but also when it is essential for them to revert back to the practitioner e.g. if there are issues of potential danger.
- **Group contract:** a group contract should be created within the peer buddy group to ensure confidentiality and respect. This also encourages the young people to take responsibility for their own experience. This process should enable the young people to engage and express what they want to achieve from the process and also put boundaries and safety structures in place. A practitioner should be on hand to ensure this is appropriate and manageable.
- **Network building:** a key element of peer buddy support is allowing the young people to extend their social network through interaction with a diverse group of peers. The young people should be facilitated to meet as many young people through this process to increase this network building. This can be done through group work or rotating of buddies. There may also be ways

that organisations find more feasible for them to do this. It is important to provide space for the young people to reflect on this and document their learnings.

- **Motivation and confidence building:** one of the key advantages of peer buddy systems is the ability of peers to promote confidence and motivation in one another. Peer buddies should be facilitated to meet with each other or share their positive experiences. This exchange allows young people to see their peers achieve goals and builds their confidence that it is possible to also reach similar goals. Peers can support each other and this can create a positive motivation to follow through on their goals.
- **Reflection on learning:** peer buddy groups should be facilitated to reflect on their learnings from the peer buddy process used by an organisation. This can be done through group feedback or reflection sessions. Equally it can be done through a learning journal or log. Allowing the young people to discuss how they wish to record or acknowledge their learning from the peer buddy system during the development of the group contract can allow more ownership of this process for the young people.
- **Young people should take as much control of the group as possible:** it is key to remember that this process should be peer led. The practitioner has a role to guide the young people through the process but at all times should be a secondary role within the interactions. The young people should be encouraged to take as much responsibility for the process as they can as this engagement is where the learning and extending of social networks through peer buddies occurs.

Evaluating Your Peer Buddy System

Ensuring the tool you develop using the guidance of the SymfoS Peer Buddy Framework is robust is paramount. Evaluation of your tool should be incorporated into your development phase. Evaluation can be carried out through the trainers who roll out the Peer Buddy System. Below is an example of a feedback form that has been utilized for all of the Peer Buddy Concepts developed in this toolkit and can be used for your own evaluation.

Trainer name	
Number of participants in pilot	
Participant profile	
Please outline the timeline of activities you undertook in bullet points	
Please reflect on the sessions and how they benefitted the group members	
Please outline how the young people gained from the activity	
Include examples of participant action plans where appropriate	

What were the benefits/challenges of using this tool as a practitioner?

--

What were the benefits/challenges for the clients?

--

What would help clients to participate in the group and gain the most from it?

--



What aspects of the model did you like in particular?

What are the improvements you feel are necessary?

Any other comments?



SymfoS Peer Buddy Concepts

Presented here are the five Peer Buddy Concepts developed by the SymfoS partnership to meet the needs of a diverse range of young people. Read through the concepts and see if there is a version that would suit your group. Make small adjustments if needed but if there are no versions that suit your group use the framework as a guide to create your own Peer Buddy System.

If you are having any difficulties or questions with this please contact your local SymfoS contact point. This is available on the SymfoS website at www.SymfoS.eu



Hafelekar Unternehmensberatung Schober GmbH, Austria
www.hafelekar.at



ZeMiT, Austria
www.zemit.at



Sozialwerk Dürener Christen, Germany
www.sozialwerk-dueren.de



Ballymun Job Centre, Ireland
www.bmunjob.ie



CESIE, Italy
www.cesie.org



Asociación Caminos, Spain
www.asoccaminos.org

Concept from Ballymun Job Centre, Ireland

Materials Used:

Basic clearing action plan

Resources and Competencies Pathway action plan

Symbol case

Process:

1. Recap:

Group members are invited to think about their individual action plans which they have developed through the SymfoS curriculum. Individuals can make notes on what they feel are their biggest barriers are to achieving their goal at the moment and use symbols from the case to highlight these. Some questions they can ask themselves include:

Goal:

Who is involved?

What steps have you taken to reach your goal so far?

What else do you need to do?

What is stopping you?

Who could help?



2. Presentation to the group:

The client presents their goal and barrier to the group. They explain as much as they can all relevant information as to why they feel they are facing difficulty overcoming this education, training or employment barrier. They can place their symbols in front of the group as prompts if they find it difficult to verbalise their story.

The group should avoid trying to reach hypothesis too quickly on what can benefit the individual. They should ask probing questions to gather as much insight into the situation as possible. If the group is veering towards solutions too early the moderator (practitioner) can step in to redirect them.

Once the group has gotten a good insight to all areas of the current barrier to completing steps on the individuals action plan they can begin offering suggestions and solutions from their own experiences. This type of peer to peer encouragement and guidance can provide relatable insights that the client can trust perhaps more quickly than those of a professional. The moderator can provide any additional technical information regarding career guidance at the end of the session that they feel is appropriate.

3. Pairing up the buddies

After all clients have presented their barriers and had time to discuss them with the group, the moderator should pair people into buddy sets. The moderator should attempt to pair together two buddies who have similar goals so they can support each other with relevant insights and encouragement.

4. Peer learning

Each set of buddies should arrange to meet within a week to discuss each other's goal. They can exchange tips and encouragement to each other on how to achieve their goal. Much of the support and networking achieved through peer buddy systems is often intangible but the moderator should encourage the buddies to identify, where possible, something that they would not have known about before they started meeting with their buddy.

Encouraging these interactions to take place in more informal, social settings can contribute to the buddies having more genuine and relaxed experiences.

5. Group presentation

After at least three buddy meetings, the group should come together again to reflect on where they are at with their respective goals. Each individual should reflect on whether the symbols they used for their action plan at the start of the peer buddy sessions have changed. If so, why or not. Individuals should then feedback to the group what they learned and give any tips they found helpful back to the larger group. This facilitates a larger peer buddy group, as well as the one on one setting.

Within this group setting it is valuable to ask clients to seek out others who they feel they can learn from. For example; if one set of buddies have described a positive learning about an interview process and this is an area that an individual in the group finds difficult in their action plan they should look to speak with the buddies to see what worked for them. This can build confidence for the individual who can get first-hand information of a positive experience for a peer.

6. Social networking

To increase the learning and building of social networking the moderator should switch the buddy pairings after the group presentation. This allows the young people to engage with new peers and build on their social network. The process can be repeated and again the learnings documented. The more times this occurs the larger the social network of the young people will become by virtue of being introduced to friends and acquaintances of the new buddies. Peer buddy systems require a lot of time as the relationships have to be built but the more time that is allowed for the process, the better the results for the clients involved.

Concept from Asociación Caminos, Spain

The quality of support will be increased by the capacity building of the peers.

Needs we detected

In our trainings and individual sessions we realized that the success of the peer buddy approach and the SymfoS intervention in general is depending very much on the capability of the young people fulfilling the role they are expected and their soft skills like listening to each other and respectful communication. Disrespectful or offensive behavior may reduce the willing- and openness of the client to face and cope with his issues, maybe misleading or even cause a rupture break of the intervention.

In many of our sessions here in Spain and also the feedback of the professionals stated that often young people are not prepared to listen and to observe carefully, then to differentiate observation from interpretation and then communicate in a non-offensive respectful way with each other. SymfoS methodology is quite of innovative nature and acting as a peer asks for several soft skills to deliver the expected support to one's friend.

Solutions we developed and tested

Therefore we decided to stress the importance of the peer buddy role by providing them a special "Peer qualification" (PQ) session before undergoing the process of counselling and providing peer support to their friends.

For participating in the (PQ) sessions it is not only important to be aware of the structure of the SymfoS counselling sessions, but also provide basic communication skills or soft skills, which will not only help the youngsters acting as a peer but also in the later job seeking process. Therefore the additional PQ sessions will focus on two main contents – group building and social skills provision.

Building of trust and the insight of working on a common feature is one of the main points of these trainings. This focus will contribute also to the motivation of the youngsters and thus increase the quality of the counselling session as well as the peer group support after the intervention. Beside this group building character of these sessions the trainer will work with the young people on the following social skills:

- Working in a climate of trust, respect and confidentiality
- Respecting speaking time per person
- Active listening, keeping silence when another person speaks
- Difference between perception and interpretation
- Encourage active participation and motivation

The PQ sessions will have a maximum duration of half-day (depending on the available timeframe) and will be directed by the trainer of the work sessions with symbols. The recommended number of participants is a maximum of twelve, but this amount will also depend on the characteristics and situation of the young people who form the group. It is important to generate a climate of trust in which young people feel comfortable and free to communicate their questions and express any doubts they may have to the counsellor.

Aims to be achieved

The aim of PQ sessions is that the Young people are better prepared and able to carry out the supporting process in an appropriate way, knowing the phases of the session, respectful communication towards client and the group, and being aware of the roles to be played by the observers. This helps to improve the quality of the process and its impact.

Structure of the PQ sessions:

1. Welcome to the participants and explanation of the contents of the PQ session
2. Concept of peer buddy system and the role of the observers during the work session with symbols
 - Peer buddy system: structure and advantages
 - The role of the observer in the SymfoS process: feedback of perceptions and interpretations

3. Exercises to train Social skills

- Working in a climate of trust, respect and confidentiality
- Respecting speaking time per person
- Active listening, keeping silence when another person speaks
- Difference between perception and interpretation
- Encourage active participation and motivation

4. At the end of these sessions, youngsters will make a kind of 'contract' with each other. The form may be chosen by themselves but it shall confirm to provide the best support possible to each other and consist of a binding agreement within the group.

At the end of each intervention we talk with the youngsters about the follow-up and how they want to go on with their steps after the interventions. So we find a common agreement together with the youngsters, their peer group and the trainer.

This agreement will also depend on the goal of the client and the size of the steps which have to be taken. So the final outcome might be either

- A follow up session to find an agreement on the next steps if there are more to undertake to reach the final goal
- A common report by client and peers of the steps undertaken to the counsellor either by phone call, email or personal.
- A reminder of the peers to keep on the goal
- An individual session of the client and the trainer after an agreed period

Whatever the client and the peers choose it will be agreed on at the end of the intervention in order to guarantee the steps to be taken.

In the annex 2, you will find a proposal of different dynamics to carry out in the PQ session. These activities can be modified and / or adapted by the professional depending on the characteristics of the service, organisation and / or entity and youngsters.

Annex 1: Some proposals for group activities for the PQ session with young people

1. WELCOME TO THE PARTICIPANTS AND PRESENTATION OF THE SESSION	
Name of the exercise	The spiderweb
Description	The participants and the trainer form a circle. The main object of the activity is a ball of wool. The first member of the group, says his name, something that he likes to do in his spare time (while holding in his hands the ball of wool). Then he passes the ball to another participant and he has to repeat all the names and leisure activities he heard before and then it is his turn to say his name and something he likes to do. In this way the thread is distributed until reaching the last participant, forming a spider web.
Purpose	Get to know each other Speak one after another Active listening
Name of the exercise	Presentation using symbols
Description	The participants will present themselves by choosing a symbol with which they feel identified. Then they have to present their symbol to the group.
Purpose	

2. CONCEPT OF PEER BUDDY SYSTEM	
Name of the exercise	The SymfoS Intervention
Description	<p>Explanation of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ different roles of participants ○ 5 steps of the SymfoS Interventions ○ advantages of the peer buddy system ○ agreement and follow up <p>The trainer explains the young people how the process is structured and the tasks to do in which way.</p>
Purpose	Help the young people to understand what SymfoS is about and how they can support their friend in the best way
Name of the exercise	Perception or interpretation?
Description	<p>The trainer explains the difference between perception and interpretation by the following example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maria smiles when she talks about her studies (perception)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • María is happy when she talks about her studies (interpretation) <p>Then he will present some other examples and the participants will have to say if it is perception or each participant has to present a perception and an interpretation of another participant in the room. There shall not be a repetition of something already presented.</p>
Purpose	Young people learn and experience(!) the difference between both.
Name of the exercise	What do I perceive? What I interpret?
Description	A video will be displayed. The video may vary depending on the group and its interests; it is convenient to adapt it to the participants so that it captures their attention. Young people will be provided with a template to collect their perceptions and interpretations. It will be discussed at the end of the activity, sharing with the group the perception and interpretation that each participant had collected.
Purpose	Train young people to perceiving what others do and to realise how much interpretations maybe right or wrong.

3. EXERCISES TO TRAIN SOCIAL SKILLS: ACTIVE LISTENING	
Name of the exercise	Are you listening?
Description	<p>We will create pairs. A member of the pair is asked to tell a story to their partner and vice versa. Each member of the pair who has to listen will have a role assigned by the trainer (active listening or not actively listening). The different roles are the following:</p> <p>A) Not active listening role: He give advice without being asked by the person speaking, he look at other parts and will not establish eye contact with the person speaking. He says "we'll talk about that later" ,he tries to tell a better story, he doesn't respond, interrupting and changing the story, etc.</p> <p>B) Active listening role: He formulates clarifying questions, he expresses that he understands how the other person feels, he looks at his face and nods his head ... remains silent while the other person speaks, etc.</p> <p>Once the activity is over, participants will give feedback how they felt. Then try it the other way round.</p>
Purpose	Experience what a difference it makes for yourself if somebody listens to you or not; Exchange on what is helpful, what not...

Name of the exercise	The interview
Description	The group is divided into pairs. Each one has to interview his partner (name, age, where are you from, etc.) and then present him / her to the all group
Purpose	Experience how it feels if somebody else is talking about you and you have to be silent; Experience also how it feels talking about somebody else sitting beside you; Also trying to remember many different things in mind.
Name of exercise	The story of Miguel
Description	<p>The group is divided into three subgroups: group 1, group 2 and group 3. Groups 2 and 3 leave the room and wait outside. The trainer will tell a story to group 1 (they can't take notes). Next, group 2 is asked to enter the room. Group 1 will tell the story to group 2. Now group 3 is asked to enter the room, group 1 leaves the room. Group 2 has to tell them what they remembers of the story to the group 3. Group 1 comes back into the room. Finally, group 3 will be asked to tell the story to group 1.</p> <p>The story of Miguel</p> <p>Miguel, a 25-year-old guy, woke up as always at 7:00 in the morning to go to work. His mother was a native of Japan and his father was from the Canary Islands. Miguel was born in Italy, since his parents lived there at the time, in a small house near the beach. Both were sculptors. For fifteen years, Miguel lived in Sicily, where he began to be interested in art, but he also liked sports a lot.</p> <p>His parents divorced when Miguel was 18, and Miguel's father married Juana, who was the mother of Miguel's best friend. Miguel went to live in Spain with his father and Juana, since his mother had gone to India for labour reasons. Miguel began studying Arts in Madrid (where he lived with his father and Juana), but he left it and went to Murcia, where he had a dutch friend, Katie, who worked in a restaurant there. He lived with her and worked in the same restaurant for a few months, but later found a better paying job as a receptionist. Miguel, who had always loved sports, entered the football team of Cartagena. At the beginning it was hard because he didn't meet anyone and he had to combine work with sports, besides the football training was not in Murcia city, but in Cartagena.</p> <p>Over time, thanks to perseverance and hard work, Miguel was promoted to captain of the team and he had opportunities to play</p>

	<p>football in other cities. He also finished his studies on sports. With some money saved, he decided to go to India to visit his mother, who was very happy and calm, and had married a man there, Akij, who was a famous painter. Miguel loved India, so much, that he decided to stay there to live. Now he works with his mother and trains the boys and girls there in football. He gets up at 7 in the morning every day helps his mother with the work and in the afternoon trains the football team.</p> <p>His dutch friend Katie, has announced that she will visit him in India next week with her cousin, her boyfriend Jose and her son Rubén. The problem is that in a week, Miguel will be traveling in Turkey to visit Ezgi, the girl he is in love with.</p>
--	--

Annex 2: Follow-up Agreement Sheet for professionals, control and supervision of agreements

FOLLOW-UP Agreement Sheet

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of the client:	
Agreed Goal:	
Counselling scenario used:	
Date:	
Counsellor:	
Organisation/entity:	
Observers:	
AGREEMENTS & ACTION PLAN	
ACTIONS	DATES



SUPERVISION AND FOLLOW-UP

Supervision and monitoring will be carried out by:

- Phone call on the.....
- Personal meeting on the
- Next counselling session on the.....
- Other ways (specify which):
- Peer buddy system (specify how):



Concept from Sozialwerk Dürener Christen, Germany

The development and establishment of the peer buddy system in the organization “Sozialwerk Dürener Christen” has to consider different settings in which the counsellors are working. Therefore it is important to have a flexible and situational approach and concept. We can differentiate within our approach between individual and group settings, and thus developed a two-step model.

In both settings the peers are involved as support of the client during the counselling process. The peers can support the client as a member of the group who contributes observations, interpretations, hypothesis or solution ideas. It is often very helpful for the client to have peers in the team as they are closer to the subjective world they live in than adults.

The peers are presented and treated as potential helpers of the client from the very beginning of the consultants.

At the end of a session, during the working step of ‘Agreements and action plan’, the peers are used as concrete help, assuming precise responsibilities. The counselor has the function of a moderator, who helps in the development of the action plan. In this role the peers should take responsibility and give support to the realization of the following and arranged steps. For example it is possible that they ask, e.g. if agreements were held on schedule or if the client needs support and company to maintain his appointments.

In many cases it is useful to invite the client and the peers for a follow up session. The counsellor should discuss resource-and solution-oriented with clients and peers, what worked well and, if something did not work, what new ideas, changes, adaptations of previous ideas exist.

1. Peer Buddy System in the context of individual counseling

Generally the consulting in the projects “JUGEND STÄRKEN im Quartier – JUST Nord”, Job- Management or the social work in secondary schools takes place in an individual setting. The clients usually come without an accompaniment; occasionally they bring friends or classmates with them.

In these settings it has proven to be successful and practicable to prepare the clients for working with symbols and to invite friends and guests explicitly.

2. Peer Buddy System in the context of group counseling

In the context of the vocational preparation courses “Start”, “Go” and “Sprungbrett” the counseling can be hold with symbols in group settings, especially during a social training. The counseling methods can be presented by a SymfoS-Trainer during a social training. A volunteer of the group is allowed to try one of the SymfoS-counseling-methods directly and choose a peer buddy afterwards.

In addition, a group of young people is to be established at the “Lernpunkt”, which regularly meets for symbolic counseling. Since these pupils meet outside the counseling at the “Lernpunkt”, they can support themselves well as peers.

In the best case, a fixed group of 3-6 young people can be installed, in which each one or several times takes over the role of the client and the others the role of a peer.

Concept from CESIE, Italy

Materials Used:

Basic clearing action plan

Template for progresses review

Opportunities for the implementation of the peer buddy system at CESIE:

CESIE acts as intermediary or hosting organisation being in charge of training courses, job shadowing activities, technical visits and European Voluntary Service (EVS). CESIE works with groups of young people in several situations, for this national concept and for the piloting phase of the peer buddy system, we refer to the work we implement with the EVS. CESIE manages the mobility of many young people enrolled in the EVS coming from different parts of Europe. Duration of the EVS services can vary from few months to one year and at their arrival the new volunteers (who are maximum 30 years old) are already involved in an Arrival training that gives basic information and guidance since the first days of their stay.

The peer buddy system in this context can be seen as an additional support offered to the single person and to the group. Usually these young people are in a stage of their life when there are looking for valuable experiences that can enrich their profile and increase occupability. Sometimes, they don't have clear ideas about their career after this period abroad and when they come back they may feel disoriented. Also, at their arrival in the new town they might suffer the cultural differences and face language barriers. Symbol work can help them explore their motivation, fears, resources and competences and the peer learning can represent a good support during their stay and later. The intervention at the beginning of their stay is an opportunity to reflect how to get the most of their experience, identify goals and plan activities.

Process (adapted to the EVS case):

1. **Small group Basic clearing interventions (4 people) at EVSs arrival in town (first meeting, during one afternoon):** this step can be part of the welcoming activities we propose and can help to explore motivation, expectations and fears and also to build a positive and well-planned stay. All participants develop their Basic clearing. We explain the aims of the activity and the role of peers. In our pilot the participants goals were related to the development of learning languages, research of an internship/job after the EVS period, finish school/choose further educational paths, develop specific projects during the EVS period (to enrich the cv). Young people can take pictures of the interventions and write their action plans at the end of the Basic clearing interventions. It is an advantage to group people with similar goals.

2. **Creation of action plans (during a second meeting of one afternoon)**

Start with a recap, the following question can be used:

- Goal?
- Who is involved?
- What steps have you taken to reach your goal so far?
- What else do you need to do?
- What is stopping you?
- Who could help?

Creation of Action plans using Resources and Competencies Pathway to reach their goals

These can be short or long plans (we proposed 6 weeks), and we also asked them to include in this plan the meetings with the peers for review of the progresses and a final meeting with counsellor.

Presentation/Group discussion on biggest barriers to reach the goals

Presentation of the action plans, barriers, discussion on how they feel, if there are similarities in their situation and so on.... Using symbols, asking questions to

understand what are the barriers to completing steps on the individual action plans, proposing ideas, suggestions and solution according their own experience.

Step 1-2-3 can be implemented in the same day. It is suggested to crate small groups, 4 people for example, to avoid that the interventions take too long.

- Peer learning:** the peers can be paired (sometimes they live together). The peers should agree how to work together and how often meet (e.g. face to face or online meetings, emails, telephone calls). We invited them to decide how to interact and also to fill in a template to review progresses (see attached). They decided to meet informally for a drink, every two weeks, keeping in mind the aim of these meetings is reviewing the progresses or provide support in case of difficulties in reaching the goal. Another idea to review progresses is to use a paper or a big poster at home where they can write their goals and actions as bar charts and colour at each meeting/email the percentage of work done and take note of barriers and support received. Depending on the level of self-organisation of the peers, can be evaluated the organisation of an intermediate meeting at the premises of the hosting organisation.

In step 3 we asked the young people to create action plans using Resources and Competencies Pathway, and also asked them to include in the action plans the meetings with the peers and final meeting with trainers.

- Final meeting:** a final meeting among the group members should take place before departure (or after a certain period depending on the goals time frame) to reflect on whether the symbols they used for their action plan at the start of the peer buddy sessions have changed, how they felt during the process, if they profited of the peer buddy system and if they provided support to others.

An idea is to use *Islands of emotions* to ask the peers how they feel now after the intervention, planning of the goals, and peer buddy system support:

- Recap on objectives
- How many times you met
- Actions taken so far

- Support provided/received

Group reflection.

- 1) **Social networking** peers are invited to join the SymfoS peers Facebook group and share the experience.
- 2) **Evaluation questionnaires** are proposed for the piloting phase to improve the experience.



Concept from ZeMiT, Austria

Background and goal

There are two ways, in which young people are attending symbol work sessions with a skilled symbol work trainer at ZeMiT: either in a one-to-one situation with a trainer or in a group of 2-4 young people, who switch roles as clients and observers. At the end of a symbol work session (basic clearing as well as other interventions), the individual client with the help of the trainer formulates his or her actions plan. When working in the group the peers support this step already through their observations and suggestions. Together with the individual action plan a follow up meeting with the client is fixed by the trainer. If possible, there can be also a follow up meeting involving the whole group. Through the following steps, we would further support the client in living up to his action plan (can also consist only of one, but important and difficult step) by connecting him with peers or a buddy.

Meeting, working, exchanging with a buddy or with peers should keep the process, which started with lying out symbols, alive and should increase the probability to fulfil the action plan. The youngsters should also have the possibility to share amongst themselves their feelings about their symbol-picture and voice their insights, which might come up after the symbol session with the trainer.

After individual symbol work session:

In that case, the trainer should - if possible – recommend one or two other young clients to the client, who just finished a symbol session. All involved peers must be asked, if they are open and ready to informally meet and exchange with another client.

Getting their consent must be done by the trainer! If done successfully, he should exchange contact numbers between the two young people, ask them to meet up and give him a short confirmation, whether they met.

This can be done by setting up a WhatsApp group with the trainer and the two clients. The group is not for shared discussion, but just to share numbers, confirm a meeting or ask again, if the meeting between the peers has happened already.

After symbol work session in small group:

After a group session, the trainer invites the clients to find together in pairs with somebody, with whom he or she wants to share their experiences in the following days and weeks. If possible, there should be pairs (2 people), if necessary, it could be also a three people peer group.

Explaining the potential of the buddy connection

The trainer will explain the youngsters that they can learn from each other, can motivate each other and that they should meet and talk about their experience, their symbol picture and their action plan.

There is no special requirement about length or content of the buddy meeting. Most important is, that the buddies really meet (or phone/chat if this is the preferred or only possible way of communication) and remember and reconnect to their symbols and their chosen steps. The trainer should ask them to focus on their concrete steps and not ponder about barriers and obstacles.

Asking them to make one commitment to each other

To make a start the trainer encourages them to ask each other “What will you do, till we meet next (hear next from each other)?” This is not a elaborated second action plan, but just an intention, which enables them later to reconnect and see, if they did it or moved in the direction of their wish/intention/commitment.

Feedback to counsellor

The trainer supports the youngsters through showing interest in their exchange, asking them to meet (if necessary) or helping them to find another buddy, if the connection doesn't work.

The follow up meeting between the trainer and the client should not focus on the buddy exchange, but on the primary action plan, the relation between trainer and client, the symbol configuration and hopefully the next steps.

The trainer should not “outsource” counselling work to the buddies, but show interest in their relation and ask, if their buddy exchange is helpful. There is no need to go into details.

Annex 1: Symbolwork Buddy Meetings

<i>Regular meetings between buddies to discuss their goals</i>	
Name of counsellor	
Organization	
Name of client	
Date of first symbol work session	
Name of buddy	
Dates of personal meetings or communications (phone/online)	
Notes	

Signature Client

Signature Buddy

Please return this form within 8 weeks to you counsellor. Thank you



Learnings from concept piloting

Each of the 5 Peer Buddy System Concepts presented in this toolkit were piloted by partner organisations. After this piloting an evaluation was carried out to establish learnings from the process and identify any needs for improvement. Practitioners listed what they felt were the most important things to keep in mind when making a client feel comfortable in a group and help them gain the most from it. We have compiled these tips and listed them here for those who chose to run their own group.

- Foster a team working spirit
- A good working climate
- Ensuring the client has an understanding that it is for support and knowing what is going on and why
- Establish where possible a group with similar objectives and backgrounds
- Offer clients meeting points to support their commitment outside of the group time
- A well-established peer group is very important to help the clients feel comfortable
- A goal that had been established through SymfoS tools prior to the peer buddy system makes the sessions much more beneficial
- Encourage clients to link with peers from around Europe on the SymfoS Peer Buddy Facebook
Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/404993199952635/>

For more information on SymfoS tools please see:

www.SymfoS.eu

<https://www.facebook.com/SymfoS/>

Project Coordinator

Hafelekar Consultancy Schober Ltd, Austria
office@hafelekar.at
www.hafelekar.at



Partners

Center for Migrants in Tyrol (ZeMiT), Austria
office@zemit.at
www.zemit.at



Sozialwerk Düren, Germany
s.henke@sozialwerk-dueren.de
www.sozialwerk-dueren.de



Ballymun Job Centre, Ireland
bakerr@bmunjob.ie
www.bmunjob.ie



CESIE, Italy
caterina.impastato@cesie.org
www.cesie.org



Asociación Caminos, Spain
office@asoccaminos.org
www.asoccaminos.org



Developer of Symbolwork
Wilfried Schneider, Germany
info@psychologische-symbolarbeit.de
psychologische-symbolarbeit.de

www.symfos.eu



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission should not be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.