TRAINING CONCEPT

for the promotion of social and personal skills in socially disadvantaged young adults as a basic condition for lifelong learning

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This project is supported by the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor anyone acting on its behalf is liable for the further use of information from this manual.
The number of people from a difficult social background who are without any training or who are only able with difficulty to find a job in their first profession is constantly increasing. Adult education is intended to provide these individuals with an opportunity to complete courses of further education and thus improve their qualifications.

Experience and studies from different parts of Europe show that adult education and lifelong learning offerings are predominantly taken up by individuals who already have a certain amount of training. The socially disadvantaged in particular are seldom represented among the trainees or experience difficulty in successfully completing educational courses. For this target group, a lack of social and personal skills can be a potential barrier. In addition to subject-specific and practical knowledge, social and personal competencies are basic adult skills which are the precondition for accessing and successfully completing any form of formal and informal training and further education. Moreover, they are crucial for developing and consolidating individual social and cultural identity. They are seen as an important resource for leading a healthy life.

Unfortunately these basic skills are rarely part of adult education curricula and few offers exist that give adults the opportunity to try them out and practise them within a protected environment.

The Pro-Skills project would like to fill this gap. This training concept aims to support adults in developing personal and social skills as a precondition for lifelong learning. To achieve this, the Pro-Skills partners brought with them expertise from different fields of work: they combined experience of working with socially disadvantaged people, adult education and sport with experience of cultivating social and personal skills in the arena of health promotion and addiction prevention.

This brochure offers no standardised training programme – this would be in contradiction to the aim of reaching a wide spectrum of target groups from the most diverse social and cultural walks of life. The training concept offers a theoretical grounding, especially in regard to educational approaches and the target group’s life situation and needs.

The core of the brochure is made up of the various modules and possible content of the training. In addition, we would like to focus on essential basic characteristics of the training and on selecting techniques and exercises.
In the process of implementing four pilot training schemes in different countries, the project team accumulated new experience of working with socially disadvantaged people. The results and insights from these training courses afford the reader a concrete insight into the training concept and assist in developing one’s own training approaches.

As this manual can offer only a brief insight, and printing all of the material would be beyond the scope of a manual, we offer additional information about the project and pilot training schemes on our homepage dedicated to the project www.pro-skills.eu, along with exercises and material we have used together with useful links and bibliographical references.

For the sake of greater clarity and readability we have used the masculine form throughout the brochure. It goes without saying that this refers to the masculine and feminine form at all times.

This project could not have been successfully implemented without financial and staffing support. The financial backing was provided by the European Commission and the partners involved in the project. Particular thanks are due to all the people and institutions that have supported us in every conceivable way and provided feedback.

We hope that this brochure will give you fresh momentum and encourage you to become a provider of basic skills so that adult education and lifelong learning can also reach the target groups who are particularly in need of them.

Your Pro-Skills team
Promoting the development of basic skills does not require us to reinvent the wheel! In recent decades, numerous outstanding basic approaches and techniques have been developed by educational science, psychology and social work which are of use in this task.

In the following pages we will provide a brief overview of selected approaches that we consider to be suitable and usable for our training concept. We will start by introducing the concept of lifelong learning as our overriding goal. The importance of basic skills for lifelong learning will be discussed. Basic approaches for self-regulated, productive, cooperative and experience-based learning will then be presented. For more in-depth reading we offer bibliographical references and links to other web pages on our website www.pro-skills.eu.

2.1 Lifelong learning

In the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, the European Council set itself a very ambitious goal for the next decade: The European Community is to “[…] become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.” (European Council 2000). Lifelong learning is seen as one of the fundamental strategies for achieving this goal, “[…] central not only to competitiveness and employability but also to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.”

This goal points to the important role attributed to lifelong learning in shaping and developing society. But what does this educational approach, which arouses such enormous expectations, actually mean?

Lifelong learning is “[…] all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.” (European Commission on Education and Training, 2006).

This definition embraces a wide array of learning settings, methods and goals. Lifelong learning spans the whole of life, from the pre-school years through into retirement; it comprises both theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills, it encompasses the acquisition, improvement and extension, in whatever form, of skills of all descriptions. And it encompasses a plethora of activities that can be broken down into three broad categories:

- **formal learning**: any formal training courses or educational attainment at schools, universities and other educational establishments characterised by an established structure in terms of learning goals, duration and methods and which lead to a formal graduation or certificate.

- **non-formal learning**: learning outside educational establishments, frequently without certification, but with a specific intention e.g. playing an instrument, learning a foreign language, sporting activities, further education courses, training events and the like…
“When planning for a year, plant corn.
When planning for a decade, plant trees.
When planning for life, train and educate people.”

Chinese proverb: Guanzi (c. 645BC)
informal learning: incidental or casual experiences and acquisition of knowledge in everyday life, such as for example intergenerational learning (parents learning how to use the computer from their children), practicing organisation strategies in planning a party etc.

The concept of lifelong learning embraces almost every type of insight. Accordingly, learning biographies are very individually tailored to the needs, interests and life situation of the individual learner.

Lifelong learning enables citizens to take an active part in social and economic life, thereby exerting a crucial influence on the society in which they live. In addition to the purely economic aspect of a qualified workforce, lifelong learning contributes first and foremost to the social integration and thereby to the social cohesion of the individual and to promoting his psychological health and wellbeing. The WHO (2001) defines psychological health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Learning, active engagement with one’s environment and the readiness to take one’s own personal self-development in hand are important indicators of psychological health. Promoting the willingness to learn and promoting health are thus interlinked.

According to the European Commission’s goal, every citizen should have continual access to lifelong learning. In order to make our own contribution en route to this goal, we will now turn our attention to basic skills and their importance to lifelong learning.

2.2 Basic skills and their importance to lifelong learning

How can the goal of lifelong learning be achieved? Lifelong learning is a very complex process: the learner has to set himself relevant and realistic goals, seek out and select opportunities and offerings, may have to contact institutions, teachers or trainers, has to cope successfully with the learning process, maintain his motivation, overcome difficulties and obstacles etc. Without basic skills and appropriate resources, organising and implementing all these processes is very difficult or even impossible.

More general basic skills come into play even before key skills such as dealing with the spoken and written word, computer literacy and such like become important: personal and social skills as well as self-management skills. They constitute the actual basis of any kind of learning process and personal development. The road to specific, subject-related further education therefore requires not just the necessary key skills but at the same time fundamental basic skills as well (figure 1).
Figure 1: Basic, key and professional skills

Unfortunately, an increasing number of people lack these basic skills. Either they are not developing them early on in their development or they are impaired in the course of their life. Socially disadvantaged people in particular have more often deficits in some basic skills. Even more than key skills, a lack of basic skills can be an obstacle to undertaking and successfully implementing education plans. This may be one of the reasons why socially disadvantaged people are rarely represented in adult education.

We are aware that living conditions, the way society is organised and the rules that govern it as well as social circumstances are further important conditions for integration into society. In this project, however, we would like to focus on the personal basis and not on the strongly influential external conditions.

Personal, social and self-management skills also influence the motivation to learn and to become actively involved in and for the environment in which one lives.

Motivation is a complex interaction of emotional and cognitive processes. New situations can evoke feelings such as curiosity or anxiety. Man assesses his skills and resources in relation to anticipated requirements and weighs up the prospects of success of alternative courses of action (self-efficacy). The value of successful implementation is also considered: Is it worth investing time and energy? Is the outcome important to me? What significance does it have for one’s own identity? As soon as the decision has been made to tackle a particular goal, skills are required to turn the intention into concrete actions and to maintain motivation throughout the entire process.
a) **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined as the *conviction and expectation of being able to implement tasks and plans successfully based on one’s own abilities and resources.*

The perception of self-efficacy is a very subjective cognition which need not coincide with a person’s actual skills! Owing to a low sense of self-esteem or experience of previous failures, people can develop a very negative assessment of their own abilities and potentialities. However, the expectation of self-efficacy largely determines the choice of alternative courses of action, the degree of effort and staying power and thereby indirectly the degree of success as well. This can result in a negative spiral: An individual with low expectations of self-efficacy will invest less effort in a task. This can result in failure and disappointment, thus confirming or further reinforcing the individual’s negative self-assessment. Conversely, people with a high expectation of self-efficacy will invest a lot of energy in a goal and also tackle challenges which, if successful, will significantly boost their personal development. Their expectation of self-efficacy is reinforced by further successful experiences.

It is obvious that strengthening the subjective perception of self-efficacy can make a essential contribution on the path to lifelong learning. Without self-esteem and the expectation of self-efficacy, almost any learning process is doomed to fail. Reinforcing basic skills that contribute to the belief in one’s self-efficacy is therefore one of Pro-Skills’ central goals.
b) Motivation and volition

The motivation for lifelong learning grows out of an individual’s motives and needs. These differ from one person to the next and can change over time.

The most important precondition for creating motivation is therefore that the person discovers his needs and goals and defines them for himself. Many people do neither reflect upon their desires nor do they have any idea what opportunities might be of interest to them. It can assist these individuals to start by reflecting on their own desires and needs.

Possible barriers to motivation can be illustrated by reference to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1954). The psychologist identified five categories of needs and postulated that higher order needs are only important to people once fundamental needs have been satisfied. For example, a person will show scant interest in education if he is experiencing financial problems or is involved in a relationship crisis. This poses a major challenge in terms of promoting lifelong learning. For a person faced with having to overcome fundamental difficulties, it is often hard to appreciate that training or further education can contribute in the long-term to solving his problems.

The mere intention to achieve a goal is usually not enough to take action for real. In addition to the motivation to plan and undertake activities for one’s own education, putting the intention into effect and maintaining motivation throughout the implementation process are of critical importance. This is what is understood by the term volition. Some of the aspects of the volitional process are actually becoming active, focusing concentration on one activity, mobilising available resources, overcoming difficulties when they arise and persisting with goals once they have been set. To this end, the person engaged in the activity requires metacognitive strategies (self-observation and self-evaluation of the thought and learning process) in order to maintain motivation, overcome unforeseen difficulties and defend the intention against alternative courses of action.

The above-mentioned aspects can be addressed in a self-management skills training course.

c) Emotion and identity

Motivation is not only a cognitive process comprising willingness and strategies but is also invariably associated with emotions. Each new situation is assessed in terms of our ability to overcome it. Taking part in a training course or in other learning settings are new and unfamiliar situations for many people. Our assessment of the situation is influenced by our expectation of self-efficacy and the prospects of successfully rising to the challenge. It is based on our assessment of our own skills, available material and social resources and on our previous experiences in similar situations. This evaluation process can be accompanied by very different feelings. The more an individual assumes that he is unable to cope with the requirements, the more uncertain
and anxious he will feel. Conversely, the person who is convinced that he is capable of coping with a new situation will feel inspired and see the new situation as a positive challenge. In both cases, the individual’s emotional state plays a logically comprehensible role: It prepares the individual psychologically and physically to respond to the situation in accordance with his own assessment of it. If the individual assesses his skills and resources positively in terms of a strong belief in his own self-efficacy, then the emotions behind it – combined with heightened alertness, concentration, a brain and muscles well irrigated with blood etc - will contribute to active problem resolution. By contrast, a person who rates his abilities as inadequate, will tend to avoid the situation because of the negative feelings he associates with it (uncertainty, anxiety, physiological disposition to flight etc). These associations are based on primeval processes which in days gone by drove man to flight or fight behaviours.

Moreover, many situations are rooted in a social context. If we find ourselves in a social situation together with other people, such as for example on a training course, others as well will observe and evaluate our behaviour. Depending on their temperament and self-assessment, this fact can both inspire people and scare them. At the same time, other people are a resource for overcoming tasks and situations. How we perceive social situations therefore depends in turn on subjective evaluation processes. If one bears this in mind, it is both necessary and helpful to be able to recognise and understand one’s own emotions and be able to deal with them in the relevant (social) context.

Figure 4: Important aspects of motivation (© Pro-Skills 2008)

Meta-cognition
Strategies
Reflection of own thoughts, emotions and values

Cognition
Estimation of situation as threat or challenge

Emotion
Fear or comfortable feeling

Identity
Cultural and social values concerning learning, its contents and methods

A further aspect of motivation concerns an individual’s values and identity. If learning and education mean nothing to us we will scarcely be motivated to invest time and energy. Values are generally developed in cultural and social groups, meaning that they can have their roots in large societies and smaller subcultures alike. If what we do is in harmony with our own values it is at the same time also an expression of our identity. If on the other hand we are compelled to act contrary to our own values – and thus contrary to our own identity - the motivation to act will tend to be low.
Socially disadvantaged individuals often have a value system which differs from or contradicts the values of “established” social groups. This distinctive identity contributes to maintaining their self-worth and their dignity.

Learning and education should respect this otherness of values and identities. It is a particular challenge for the trainer to integrate the value of lifelong learning into the value system of the target group in question. The motivation to learn and to expose oneself to novel situations will be higher if the learning objectives and the way in which one learns are compatible with one’s own identity. One’s own values can however be an obstacle especially if the individual has had negative experiences with traditional education systems. These individuals often avoid any learning situation so as to avoid failure and protect their own feeling of self-worth. This is where educational approaches which differ significantly from traditional learning come into play. They can assist in reflecting on one’s own attitudes and finding a new access to learning, and new motivation to learn.

It is obvious that these new access channels to learning have to connect with the learner’s existing identity. A particularly negative example of the failure to show consideration for existing identities is the way that aborigines were treated in the past.

To conclude, social and cultural identity is also a learning resource and can become an important foundation for a healthy sense of self-esteem if treated in a considerate and respectful way as part of a training course.

2.3 Educational approaches

As already mentioned, there are a number of educational approaches that offer valuable techniques for the purposes of our training concept: these approaches are:

- self-regulated learning,
- productive learning,
- cooperative learning and
- experience-based learning.

The aforementioned approaches will be presented briefly below. For more in-depth reading our homepage www.pro-skills.eu offers bibliographical references and relevant Internet pages.

2.3.1 Self-regulated learning

The capacity for self-regulated learning is a fundamental precondition for successful lifelong learning. Only if the learner is able by himself to implement all the steps of the learning process autonomously and independently of teachers or other persons in authority will he be able to adapt his plans and efforts to changing circumstances and developments in his life situation.
Why is self-regulated learning so important?

- **Knowledge explosion:** Technical, scientific and social developments in recent decades have resulted in a breakneck expansion and rapid obsolescence of knowledge. This has given rise to a constant need for further education that traditional educational methods and systems are unable to cope with.

- **New information and communication technology:** Thanks in particular to Internet and multimedia presentations, the learner has access to an immense wealth of information and knowledge. This makes learning independent of space and time. In order to be able to exploit the advantages of these new resources to best effect, the challenge for the learner is to organise and manage his learning process by himself.

- **Self-regulated learning meets the demands of adult learners:**
  Adult learners do not want to be subject to external control. They would like to organise and design their learning process by themselves.

Self-regulated learning means that the learner designs and controls his entire learning process by himself and acts on his own authority in making the necessary decisions on the following aspects of the learning:

- learning goals (why and what for?)
- learning content (what? which content?)
- resources and materials (with what?)
- learning methods and strategies (how?)
- time (when and for how long?)
- review (achievement of the goal and possible modification of the learning strategy)

There are four important components to bear in mind here:

- Motivation (intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy expectations, volition)
- Cognition (strategies for learning, applying and transferring knowledge, reviewing and modifying the learning process)
- Use of existing resources
- Interaction (social resources)

Self-regulated learning is an important step in empowerment. The learner is empowered to organise himself and stand up for his rights and interests.

### 2.3.2 Productive learning

Productive learning is a new form of learning which is progressively replacing traditional practices. The underlying principle is **learning from experience in real-life situations.**

This creates the direct connection between the learning process and the life the learner actually leads and emphasises meaningfulness.

The learner develops a retrospective understanding of processes from his practical experience and is able to build on this to improve what he does in future. For a number of learning types, this form of learning is significantly easier to understand than abstract and theoretical learning.
“Do not be afraid to grow slowly. But beware of standing still.”

Chinese proverb
At the same time, the learner experiences being able to use his abilities to make a difference and achieve something; he experiences his own strengths and resources. This arouses intrinsic motivation for learning and reinforces the expectation of self-efficacy. One’s own weaknesses are also recognised and work to address them can be intensified.

**Productive learning aspires to create three important learning connections:**
- **Personal connection** with the learner himself: the importance of learning and of the learning content for the learner’s personality and development, for his strengths and needs is to be emphasised; the learner is transformed from object to actively engaged subject shaping his own education process; this form of learning offers a very personal, practice-oriented and therefore very successful access to learning;
- **Practical connection:** Learning grows out of productive activity and feeds back into it; in consequence, learning connects with everyday processes and structures and specific fields of action; this is what sets productive learning apart from traditional learning settings where it is common for purely theoretical knowledge to be taught and no connection forged with real life;
- **Cultural connection:** In addition to subject-specific processes, each learning situation also contains social, societal and cultural aspects from which the learner can benefit; creating these cultural connections can contribute to integrating the individual into society.

### 2.3.3 Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning describes learning arrangements such as partner and group activities. Generally speaking, cooperative learning requires a contemporaneous (synchronous) or time-displaced (asynchronous), coordinated, co-constructive activity as well by the participants. The core goal of cooperative learning is always to find a common solution to a problem or to develop a shared understanding of a situation.

In cooperative learning situations the task is shared, with each participant - or each small group, as the case might be, - solving a subtask and with all of the individuals’ or small groups’ results being combined into an overall result.

It is intrinsic to cooperative learning that each team member is responsible both for the group’s learning and also for his own.

There are two levels of responsibility with cooperative learning: Firstly, the responsibility of the entire group for achieving its group goals and secondly the individual responsibility of each member of the group for contributing his share of the work.

With cooperative learning, participants acquire communication skills such as asking questions, listening, explaining, developing new ideas or solutions through discussion. In addition however, they also learn cooperative skills by respecting the other person and his opinion and undergo the learning process as a shared experience. Cognitive and social learning are therefore being combined. Cooperative learning enables participants actively to contribute their own knowledge and ideas to the learning process, thereby stimulating the motivation to learn, which in turn has a positive impact on the learning process.

*“Behind every successful man there are always other successful men.”*  
Chinese proverb
With cooperative learning, participants of all age groups experience learning as an active process that is important and enduring. The focus of cooperative learning is first and foremost on the “how” and only in a second step on the learning content. Cooperative learning is used to stimulate curiosity and pleasure in shaping teaching and learning processes. The learner recognises that he himself is able to decide his learning goals and shape the learning process.

The cooperative learning environment to be designed by the “coach” is characterised in that it:

- creates positive dependencies: there is a common group objective or common product; materials, resources and information are shared fairly;
- aims towards individual responsibility: the individual assumes responsibility for the entire group’s learning and comprehension;
- enables direct interactions: participants cooperate closely and directly so that they can learn from one another;
- develops social skills: group members communicate, exchange information, take decisions together;
- contains contemplation on working in a group: the group members join in reflecting on what they have learnt and suggest improvements.

The benefit of cooperative learning for the Pro-Skills training concept is that it combines the individual and collective levels, thus identifying, encouraging and consolidating both personal and social skills in a practical way.

2.3.4 Experience-based learning

Learning is always associated with concrete experience and adult learners in particular compare new situations with past experiences, existing knowledge and cognitive schemata.

David A. Kolb and Roger Fry (1975) developed the experience-based learning cycle which continues even to this day to make a fundamental contribution to understanding adult learning. The model is based on four learning phases:

Figure 5: Learning cycle according to Kolb & Fry (1975)
Concrete experience: At the beginning of the learning process the individual usually undertakes an action and experiences the consequences of their action in a concrete situation.

Observation & reflection: The individual observes and reflects on the situation retrospectively, in the process recognising causes and correlations. In this phase of the learning process, the individual is able to predict the consequences of acting in the same way in the same situation.

Developing abstract concepts: If a number of similar experiences accumulate, the individual starts to generalise based on the parallels. The insights gained can be transferred to new situations.

Reviewing and transferring the concepts: Once the individual has understood the underlying principle, he begins actively to experiment, to introduce variations and transfer the concept to other situations and conditions. If a learning process has indeed occurred, the individual is now in a position to predict the possible consequences of an action in all sorts of different circumstances. The learner becomes active, influencing the situation in pursuit of his own goals and interests.

Kolb (1975) posits that the learning process is subject to a circular development. Faced with new situations, the learner reviews the internal concepts he has developed from previous experience and adapts them in the light of the new experiences he is accumulating.

Traditional education systems frequently attempt to convey knowledge and skills by teaching theoretical concepts which the learner has to transfer to real life situations. Kolb and Fry’s approach on the other hand is aimed at learners who need concrete experiences in the here and now to acquire new insights or skills. Taking the experience-based learning cycle as their starting point, Kolb and Fry point out that there are different types of learner: Individuals who themselves become active and need to garner “tangible” concrete experience and individuals who tend to take a cognitive approach to new material, who reflect very deeply on matters and draw abstract conclusions.

In either case, concrete experience and the combination of new content and skills with pre-existing knowledge are very conducive to the learning process and are more readily accepted by learners than conventional learning methods.

2.4 The target group

The target group of the Pro-Skills training concept are all socially disadvantaged people - especially young adults - who are lacking basic skills. But what exactly do we mean by “socially disadvantaged”? We will explain what we understand by this term below and take a look at the target group, its living conditions and attitude to further education.
2.4.1 Definition: Social disadvantage and socially disadvantaged individuals

Socially disadvantaged is the term used to describe all those people who have no guaranteed rights to basic needs, from the material to the cultural, and whose potential and possibilities, whatever they might be, are not recognised.

Social disadvantage exists whenever an individual is exposed to unequal social conditions compared with other members of their social group thereby finding it difficult, especially in their social context, to access existing resources (Izzo 2000; De Leonardis 2000).

Such a situation of social disadvantage depends on numerous factors and the way they interact, hampering efforts to include these individuals in society (De Leonardis 2000).

2.4.2 Principal factors behind social disadvantage

Economic factors
Unemployment, especially over an extended period, but also economic instability, leading to insecure and poor quality working conditions, are to be mentioned. In situations such as these, there is no assurance of the necessary income, resources nor of important social interaction either.

Cultural factors
Social disadvantage can arise from a lack of cultural and cognitive resources and capabilities, from inequality of access to the education system to barriers impeding social communication and the flow of information; membership of a social minority or of a particular ethnic group with different values and a different cultural identity can also lead to discrimination and social exclusion.

Political and institutional factors
Any person who is unable to participate in civic life is socially disadvantaged. This can come about if civil or political rights are denied, along with the right to health, education and social security, which are a citizen’s most fundamental rights.

Further important triggers of social disadvantage can be physical and mental impairments, gender and particular phases of life (childhood or old age).

2.4.3 Particular aspects of social disadvantage

It is worth mentioning that social disadvantage can have both extreme and also less onerous repercussions. On the one hand there are cases of radical disadvantage with an enormous lack of resources and outright violations of human rights. On the other hand there are manifold forms of short or medium-term, but also latent social exclusion, passivity and alienation of civic participation, cases in which civil rights are not really practised. This is also compounded by
complex situations of instability with which people often have to contend suddenly and without preparation.

Various studies (cf. Castel 1995) point to the fact that social disadvantage is not a static living condition afflicting the individual or a particular social group but is a **dynamic process** of increasing loss, akin to a spiral, in which different social aspects all add up, interact and thus multiply or mutually reinforce one another.

**Castel differentiates between three zones of social life:**
- **the integration zone:** this is where people are to be found who have a secure job and a solid social network
- **the vulnerability zone:** for example, people whose job is not secure or live in unstable social relationships with little social support
- **the exclusion zone:** into which people can slide, both from the integration and the vulnerability zone.

Processes which lead the individual into socially disadvantaged situations can occur in every stratum of society, even from within the very midst of “normality” and they affect virtually the entire population.


Risk goes hand in hand with contemporary social evolution and our society is permeated by a feeling of insecurity. This is increasingly defining relationships between individuals, their social context and their personal life. Social vulnerability always arises if the social fabric of family, community and profession becomes frayed and offers little protection. Instability, heterogeneity and an uncertain biography during one’s personal life pose far greater risks for the individual than in the past.

Ever more people have to cope with critical phases in their life, be it the loss of their job, family relationships or social support. These situations cause great stress and illnesses and can cause further problems and sources of disadvantage if the individual does not possess the necessary personal and social resources to overcome the crisis.

Tackling and overcoming social disadvantage in all its diverse forms requires new methods and campaigns, while also calling for programmes and projects which enable the individual to play an active part in developing out of his social disadvantage, acquiring new means and capabilities for claiming his rights, taking decisions and effecting change (Sen 1992; Basaglia 1984; Rotelli 1999).
2.4.4 Studies on lifelong learning for the socially disadvantaged

Socially disadvantaged adults are only sparsely represented in lifelong learning and adult education offerings. American literature surveys (e.g. Courtney, 1992) show that further education is the domain of young adults with good educational qualifications and high income. Adult education seems to exist more to build on already existing high-quality training rather than to compensate for personal shortcomings.

McGivney (1993) identified the following groups of individuals who are barely involved at all in adult education:
- individuals with no or little schooling
- individuals with a lack of basic skills
- individuals on low incomes
- unskilled workers
- ethnic minorities
- older adults
- mothers with young children
- individuals with physical or mental impairments
- individuals from rural or poor regions

Individuals who show no interest in adult education, often have had a negative experience of school and have developed an aversion to teaching situations. Psychosocial barriers such as doubts about the personal benefit of education, fears of failure or a low sense of self-esteem are more commonly found in socially weaker strata with the consequence that these individuals do not avail themselves of further education offerings.

Socially disadvantaged adults generally have difficulties continuing their education as (Beder, 1990; Schwänke, 1990):
- their motivation for further education is very low
- they lack a basic school education
- they have never embarked on or completed any professional training
- their professional qualifications are out of date
- they are insufficiently able to learn
- further education within the target group’s social context is not recognised
- other difficulties dictate their life situation (financial difficulties, problems of adjustment, the loss of social contacts, dependency etc)

The influence of social milieu - in particular the parental home - on the motivation to learn and further one’s education is crucial (Schräder-Naef, 1997). Situational aspects and external influences can however change the willingness to engage in further education. A positive relationship between trainer and learner is also critical to learning success and can provide vital support to the interest in learning and learning content (Gieseke, Janofsky & Lüken, 1989).
2.4.5 How can socially disadvantaged people be reached?

In order to apply the Pro-Skills training concepts and reach socially disadvantaged people, two aspects need to be considered:

The first aspect concerns the fact that members of the target group frequently are in contact with social or cultural institutions. That is why it is particularly important to collaborate with cooperation partners from these institutions in order to

- gain information about the target group’s needs and attributes
- create awareness of the importance of basic skills
- reveal the training course’s goals and approach
- jointly develop a concept acknowledging the target group
- jointly work out how the value of the training course can be embedded in the target group’s social context.

The second aspect concerns the target group’s motivation. It is very important to organise a preparatory meeting with the individual participant prior to the training course so as to find out

- what needs and interests the participants are bringing with them
- what expectations they have of the training course
- what attitudes they have towards their skills and capabilities and whether they would like to enhance them
- how they assess their own life situation and what feelings they are harbouring
- how do they stand with respect to the training course and working with others in a group.

As part of this preparatory meeting, the trainer should provide information on

- basic skills
- the training course’s goals and methods
- the training course’s rules, timings and venue
- himself and the roles he plays during the training course.

It is very important to fathom and develop a feel for the extent to which an individual needs change, how he feels about this, how new ways of thinking and feeling can be supported, on how broad a front and to what depth the training may be able to penetrate or whether other interventions and resources are required.
We would like below to present the Pro-Skills training concept as devised by the European project group. As already mentioned, we do not offer a standardised training programme. Different groups of socially disadvantaged individuals have very different characteristics and needs which have to be taken into account and with which the flow and design of the training course, selection of the materials and exercises need to be coordinated.

This training concept offers a good theoretical grounding as well as guidelines relating to the goals, content, methods and general framework for a Pro-Skills training course. For practical illustration, you will find reports on the four pilot training schemes in the following chapter.

3.1 Training goals

The Pro-Skills training concept aspires to achieve the following with the participants:

- **Motivation**: The training course would like to inspire interest and motivation for lifelong learning in the participant.
- **Human rights**: Participants shall become sensitised for their right to education and equal access to educational offerings.
- **Recognising own opportunities**: Participants will be made aware of the opportunities available to them to further their education and change their life.
- **Taking personal responsibility**: Participants will no longer feel they are guilty and victims of society; they will learn not to accept this role if they have been assigned it by others.
- **Recognising own resources and strengths**: Participants are to recognise their existing resources and strengths and develop ideas as to how they can enhance them and acquire new ones.
- **Acquiring skills**: Participants will actively upgrade their skills and be given the opportunity to experiment with new skills and behaviours in the protected environment of the training course.
- **Self-worth and self-efficacy**: The training course aspires to support participants’ sense of self-worth and instil in them the feeling of self-efficacy which is a fundamental precondition for the remainder of the learning process.
- **Empowerment for self-regulated learning**: Participants will be empowered to plan and implement their own individual learning process independently and on their own authority.
- **Equal access to educational offerings**: Participants will be helped to find equal access to formal and informal educational offerings.

Respecting different values!

The trainer should respect the participants’ values. It is his task to forge a link between the value of lifelong learning and participants’ values and previous experience and not to foist his own moral concepts on them.
“We cannot teach people anything; we can only help them discover it within themselves.”

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)
3.2 Training content

The specific content of the training course depends on the attributes, needs and prior knowledge of the target group in question. In turn, Pro-Skills offers training modules containing materials and exercises relevant to many and diverse aspects and topic areas.

There follows a description of the three core training modules. In each case, the Pro-Skills toolbox refers to selected materials and exercises that have been collated by the project partners and are deemed to be good practical examples. All of these materials are available as a download on the Pro-Skills webpage [http://www.pro-skills.eu]. You are also welcome to contact a project partner in your own country and request additional material in your own national language. We will also be happy to advise you on how to design your own training projects.

We would like to point out from the outset that many basic skills are interlinked and that categorising them as personal, social and self-management skills is not always clear-cut.

**Personal skills**

What we mean by personal skills is the ability to reflect on and regulate internal concepts and processes such as emotions, cognitions and one’s own identity.

*Figure 6: Personal skills (©Pro-Skills 2008)*

**Aspects of personal skills are:**

- **Emotions and emotion regulation**: The ability to perceive and express one’s own feelings and deal appropriately with them;
- **Cognition**: Self-reflection, realistic self-assessment, overcoming problems, perception of one’s own desires and goals, identifying barriers and resources, goal-setting and decision-making;
- **Identity regulation** and self-worth, self-confidence and self-efficacy;

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[http://www.pro-skills.eu]
Social skills
Social skills are abilities and behaviours that help to direct the focus of one’s own behaviour away from one’s own self towards a shared alignment with other individuals. Socially competent behaviour combines the individual’s goals with the values and goals of a social group.

Figure 7: Social skills (© Pro-Skills 2008)

Aspects of social skills are
- **Cooperation and ability to work in a team:** Openness and tolerance, sociableness, use of social resources, conducting negotiations, leadership skills, intercultural skills;
- **The ability to communicate:** Language skills, active listening, feedback, empathy, giving and receiving recognition;
- **Conflict resolution / the ability to compromise**
- **Group dynamic processes**

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[http://www.pro-skills.eu](http://www.pro-skills.eu)
Self-management skills

Self-management skills are crucial to successfully planning and implementing activities. Each activity – if it is done more or less consciously – is based on a sequence of cognitive and active steps. Psychological theories deal in detail with the cognitive processes.

Figure 8: Self-management skills (©Pro-Skills 2008)

With regard to learning processes, the following steps can be distinguished:

- **Goal-setting:** The individual must set a specific learning goal. The overriding goal may for example be earning one’s living, a higher standard of living or a higher level of educational attainment. What is now needed is to define interim goals en route to the higher-level goal, which in turn requires additional cognitive and active processes to be performed.

- **Calculating resources and barriers:** The individual has to weigh up resources such as time, money, social support and resolve practical problems such as childcare during a training course, reaching the event venue and suchlike. Weighing up resources and barriers can influence which goals are chosen.

- **Effective planning of the project:** The individual develops a sort of work plan as well as a realistic timetable having regard to the resources available and the existing barriers.

- **Step-by-step implementation:** The planned steps of the activity now have to be successfully implemented in the correct sequence. To this end, resources have to be mobilised, obstacles overcome and timetables and deadlines adhered to. In the process, further obstacles and questions may surface which were not previously discernible or had not been taken into consideration. The individual must respond flexibly to these circumstances when selecting techniques and using resources so as to achieve their interim goals.

- **Maintaining motivation:** Putting the steps the activity entails into practice may take some time and require unforeseen obstacles to be surmounted. To achieve this, the individual requires patience and stamina as well as constant motivation.

PRO-SKILLS SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS TOOLBOX

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fi http://www.pro-skills.eu
3.3 Training preconditions and framework

Training courses for the socially disadvantaged are not significantly different from other training courses if modern didactic principles are taken into account. However, this target group requires greater didactic and educational expertise on the part of the trainer. Motivation, group dynamics, communication and cultural aspects assume greater prominence. In particular, the trainer needs to think about the perceived balance of power if he wishes to empower individuals who not infrequently carry the stigma of powerlessness.

Three interacting components of the training course mutually influence one another: The trainer, the participants and the training course itself. In addition to these principal actors, the situational context should not be overlooked. We would like to address the above-mentioned components in more detail below.

Figure 9: Interacting components of training (Morand-Aymon, 2007)

3.3.1 The trainer

In the following pages we would like to shed more light on the trainer’s skills, characteristics and tasks which we consider to be necessary for positively and successfully implementing this training concept for the socially disadvantaged. We are aware that we are portraying an optimal picture and thereby setting high standards. It seems to us to be important to strike a balance between the maximum amount of available staffing resources that can be employed and the minimum number of personnel required to ensure the quality of the training course. Nevertheless we would like to encourage small institutions as well to conduct a training course such as this.

Before we turn our attention to the characteristics of the trainer, we would like to discuss the preferred number of trainers to implement the training course.

Individual trainer or team?
Is it enough to have one single specialist available to implement the training course or is it necessary to work in a team?

“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”
Albert Einstein (1879-1955)
Our training concept aims to develop different skills areas using diverse methods which require the trainer to possess multiple skills. We would like to mention that we recommend training teams of at least two people for any type of training course.

There are many reasons for this:
- Implementing an interactive training course and coordinating the group requires a great deal of work, especially if the training course is to be designed to be interesting and maintain the participants’ motivation. Nobody can deliver 100% performance throughout the entire day.
- It requires very different capabilities and skills to implement a training course and coordinate a group of participants. Nobody is perfect – a number of trainers can complement one another’s strengths and specialist skills.
- To ensure that flexibility is designed into the training schedule and that the course is tailored to the participants’ needs and resources, one needs to look at the entire sequence of events and processes as they relate to group dynamics.
- As with every human, trainers and participants as well are influenced by sympathy and antipathy. It would be regrettable if the training were to miss its mark because a participant could not get on with the trainer as an individual. Employing a training team increases the chance of each participant finding a contact person he can trust.

What appears to be optimal is
- an interdisciplinary team in which different professional groups complement each other’s skills and expertise;
- a team comprising different characters and both sexes;
- including an individual who is familiar with the target group and its life situation.

It goes without saying that forming such an ideal team is not always easy, especially if the training course is being staged by a small institution. In this case it may help to cooperate with other institutions.

When we talk about “the trainer” below, what we invariably mean by this is the option of a training team as well.

Skills and knowledge:
The trainer requires a number of fundamental skills and background knowledge enabling him to implement the training course effectively and successfully. A number of these skills are necessary for any training course but assume particular significance when dealing with the socially disadvantaged target group, especially if the latter are carrying the baggage of adverse previous experience with conventional education systems.

From our perspective, the following skills and knowledge are of particular importance for this training concept:
- sensitivity to cultural aspects (in particular to the target group’s social culture)
- communication skills
- moderating and organisational skills
- the ability to cooperate and work in a team
- background knowledge of group dynamics processes
the ability to excite and maintain the participants’ motivation
observation skills (observing group dynamics and the entire training process
the flexibility to adapt the training course to the relevant participating group and its needs
expert knowledge of (interactive) educational approaches (see Chapter 2.3)
expert knowledge of lifelong learning
the ability to encourage participants to get involved and take an active part
knowledge of and methods for planning learning processes
practical experience of staging training courses
the awareness of one’s own value system

In summary, our conclusion is that the trainer should have completed basic pedagogical, social or psychological qualification.

Experiences with and attitude towards the target group
Sensitivity to cultural background is an additional important precondition the trainer should possess. To align the training course with the relevant target group, the trainer requires solid background knowledge of the target group’s life situation, needs and resources. If he does not have any personal experience of dealing with the target group, it can be helpful to establish advance contact with someone representing the target group’s interests or even to integrate them into the training team. Personal contact should be established with the participants a few days prior to the training course and an interview of sorts organised in which questions can be asked about the participants’ specific expectations of the training course.

Based on this, the trainer can develop the necessary empathy for the target group. In order to be able to work effectively with it, the trainer requires a certain degree of sympathy for and interest in the target group and should show tolerance for the participants’ life experiences and values. Self-regulated learning in terms of empowerment can only be achieved if the trainer does not foist his own values and perspectives on the participants. Instead, the participants should be engaged with on their own ground and be able to contribute their own experiences. The trainer can explain his own attitudes and offer new or complementary value concepts but should never present these as the “only true” point of view.

The trainer supports the participants in devising new goals and skills by themselves; he is a sort of coach but not a leader. It seems to us to be very important that the “balance of power” between trainer and participants remains in equilibrium. What this requires is for the trainer constantly to reflect on his own influential position and the socially disadvantaged situation of the participants.

The trainer’s tasks

The trainer is responsible for the following general aspects of the training course:

A clearly defined framework and clear and realistic objectives should be made transparent for the participants.
The trainer should work with the participants’ resources and align the training course with their experience and previous knowledge.
He ought to observe and evaluate the training process and tailor it to the participants’ needs if so required.
The participants should be able to comprehend the training process so that they can appreciate their experiences within the group.

The trainer should be aware of his role and in particular of his boundaries within the training course context (e.g. education vs. therapy).

Linked to this, he should collaborate with other organisations and, if necessary, make contact with institutions and experts capable of supporting participants with other goals and questions.

3.3.2 The training course

The training course can follow particular principles to meet participants’ needs and to ensure a positive and productive atmosphere.

Trust
It is very important for the participants to feel accepted and to develop trust in the trainer and training.

This can be fostered by the following aspects:

- Training should always take place under the aegis of a known organisation or institution and not under the personal responsibility of an individual trainer.
- It can be helpful for participants to get to know the trainer and the premises before training commences. As a result they will be familiar with the setting and will already feel somewhat more confident when the training gets under way. Individuals who do not feel confident can cancel their participation in the training without losing face.
- The participants should receive detailed prior information about the content, techniques and rules of the training course.

Acceptance and good atmosphere
A good atmosphere within the group and mutual acceptance between participants are essential for staging a successful training course, especially when we are working with target groups who are familiar with rejection and social exclusion in their day-to-day lives.

This requires a number of basic rules:

- The group atmosphere has first priority. Conflicts between participants should be discussed immediately. Quite incidentally, these situations lend themselves to practicing social skills in a practical context.
- A number of basic rules should be agreed at the beginning of the training course, for example feedback rules, accepting different opinions and previous experiences etc. Depending on the group and timeframe, these rules can be developed together with the participants.
- Training should be fun. Sufficient time should be scheduled for breaks, relaxation or games and exercises to lighten the atmosphere (specific ideas: Fischer et al, 2004).
“I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.”

Confucius
Take account of participants’ needs

The training course should take account of the participants’ needs and specific characteristics:

- When the training course gets underway, participants should have the opportunity to express their needs and expectations.
- Participants should be actively involved in designing the training course. In the process they can be helped to identify and select their learning goals for the training course themselves.
- The training course design and techniques should be consistent with the target group’s cultural and social background. Participants should be able to introduce their cultural identity.
- The training course content and techniques should tie in with the target group’s previous knowledge and everyday life.
- Participants need to be motivated and empowered to transfer their newly acquired skills to everyday life and try them out in “real” situations.
- The learning process should envisage small steps from the familiar to the unfamiliar and from simple to more challenging material. It is the trainer’s responsibility to ensure that each participant is able to follow the learning process.
- The participants’ questions and expectations should be answered.
- If possible, the participants should be able to continue their learning process after the training course. For example, this can be in the form of an ongoing training course or by group meetings for exchanging information.
- The results and learning successes should be acknowledged upon conclusion of the training course. Firstly, respect should be shown for the participants’ commitment and successes. Secondly, the participants should receive a form of certificate or written reference that they can specifically use for their own purposes (e.g. applications).

3.3.3 The participants

Not only the trainer and training course but the participants as well should satisfy certain fundamental criteria:

- So that the participants really can benefit from the training, they need to possess a modicum of capabilities enabling them to interact, comprehend and learn. This means for example that there has to be a certain command of the language in order to ensure communication.
- The participants must be motivated to take part in the training course and exercises. They should be open to learn new things and for the possibility of personal development or change.
- This presupposes that the participants’ involvement in the training course is voluntary.
- One aspect which cannot categorically be answered is the question about the group’s homogeneity or heterogeneity. A homogenous group may be easier to handle, the course content can be tailored to specific questions relevant to many or even all the participants. In a heterogeneous group, on the other hand, the participants can benefit from their differences and learn from other people’s different experiences and knowledge. It seems advisable to maintain a balance between diversity and similarity and thereby take account both of the social learning objective while also enabling participants to feel quickly at home in the group.
In the same manner, no one-size-fits-all statement can be made about the participants’ familiarity and anonymity. Anonymity affords the participant the opportunity to speak and behave freely without the others having a preconceived opinion about him and without misgivings about how one’s behaviour on the training course will affect existing relationships. On the other hand, depending on the target group, participants in a familiar peer group can operate in a more free and less inhibited manner and provide one another mutual support during the training course. The trainer has to weigh up the influence of dependencies and strong social ties within the training group and select the set-up that seems to him to make the most sense in terms of promoting individual development.

Thought should be given to exclusion criteria before and during training. Depending on what the training course purports to achieve, physical or mental illnesses, dependency, substance use etc may have a counterproductive effect on participation in the training course.

Contract between the trainer and the group
It can be helpful to conclude a contract between the trainer and the participants. This contract defines the training course’s overriding goals, states what both parties are to contribute to the training and can lay down from the outset a number of fundamental rules and obligations (e.g. regular participation, punctuality or the like). This type of agreement is an initial contribution to ensuring that participants themselves assume responsibility for the training course.

You will find an example of such a contract in the Pro-Skills toolbox on our homepage www.pro-skills.eu!

3.3.4 Training context

A number of other underlying conditions can influence the way a training course proceeds. The premises are of particular importance. They should:
- be readily accessible for the target group (travel costs and distance)
- be known to the participants and accepted by them
- provide all the necessary resources for the training course
- provide for complimentary or low-priced meals and overnight accommodation if required
- be independent of institutions that the participants associate with other obligations (e.g. therapeutic centre, job centre or police station).
3.4 The Pro-Skills toolbox: Examples of good practice

The European project’s partners have created an extensive collection of recommendable materials and exercises for promoting basic skills. It would not do justice to the plethora of materials to present just a few examples at this point by way of example.

That is why we are offering all of the materials on our webpage www.pro-skills.eu. You are also welcome to contact Pro-Skills partners and request materials in your national language. Contact names and addresses are listed in Chapter 5 of this manual.

We are providing an overview below of the topics and content areas of the Pro-Skills Toolbox and an example by way of illustration.

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Below, you will find an example of how Pro-Skills toolbox exercises are structured.
## THE MAGICAL BAMBOO STICK

**Timeframe:** ~ 20 mins

**Premises:** inside or outside

**Group size:** 6 individuals plus

**Materials:**
A light bamboo stick approximately 2 metres in length (one stick per 6-8 individuals; correspondingly more sticks for larger groups)

**Process:**
The participants stand in two rows facing one another. Their arms are stretched out in front of them with the index fingers of both hands extended. The trainer lays the bamboo stick across all of the participants’ index fingers. The task for the group now is jointly to lay the bamboo stick on the ground without a single finger losing contact with the stick.

As the exercise is usually not successful the first time round (the stick usually creeps ever higher upwards or the participants lose contact with the stick), the approach taken by the group there needs to be moderated.

**Goal / purpose:**
The task sounds easy, but is not. The participants have to lower the stick at the same time or else someone will lose contact or the stick will topple and fall down.

While the group is performing the exercise, the trainer observes the group processes and keeps track of who takes control of the group, who organises the situation etc.

**Questions for the subsequent discussion:**
- Was it easy to put the stick down or not?
- Where did the difficulty lie?
- Why did it finally succeed?
- How did you communicate?
- Did someone take command?

**Source:**
PFIFF games pool, Hochschule Fulda, University of Applied Sciences
The Pro-Skills teams’ work did not of course end with development of the training concept. It was important for the partners to put the concept into practice in different countries and contexts with different target groups and check to ensure it was fit for purpose. Four Pro-Skills partners implemented the training concept in their own countries working with a very diverse assortment of target groups:

- **Wilde Bühne** – combining Pro-Skills elements with a drama project for former drug addicts
- **MEKKA** – implementing a classic Pro-Skills training scheme for young Roma catching up on their schooling
- **PROTASI** – implementing a classic Pro-Skills training scheme for young unemployed people from different social backgrounds
- **Hochschule Fulda, University of Applied Sciences** – implementing Pro-Skills elements in the context of a sports and exercise course for participants in a pre-vocational training initiative

We would like below briefly to describe the concepts and content of the four pilot training schemes in order to give the reader a specific insight into how to implement the training concept and help develop individual training approaches. This will emphasise various features of the training.

A standard questionnaire for participants was developed to evaluate the pilot training schemes, which was employed both before and after the training. The questionnaire records the most important goals of the Pro-Skills concept: improved personal, social, self-management and learning ability skills and prospects for personal self-improvement. Specifically training-related issues and satisfaction were also recorded. Information on how the trainers were rated was also captured using a structured questionnaire. In addition to the questionnaire, a variety of verbal and creative feedback techniques were also employed. Further information about the evaluation and tools involved is to be found on the [www.pro-skills.eu](http://www.pro-skills.eu) website. The results of these surveys and feedback from the individual pilot training schemes, and more besides, are summarised below.

### 4.1 Wilde Bühne

Wilde Bühne is a socio-cultural forum using drama as a medium for working with former drug addicts. The issue of identity is the focus of day-to-day work. That is why Wilde Bühne applied elements of the Pro-Skills training concept in the context of a drama project.

The pilot project therefore took place within a very special context. The following description of the drama project highlights examples of how elements of the training concept can be integrated with other activities. The project majored on imparting personal and social skills.

**A. Framework**

**Target group and specific goals:**
The target group for the drama project were nine former drug addicts currently living in a treatment centre.
“Even a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Confucius
The particular aim of the training scheme was to improve and expand social skills. The participants were to acquire new skills for later life outside the treatment centre in a creative and active way.

**Timeframe:**
The training format was a **five-day project** extending over a 40-hour timeframe.

**Trainers and resources employed:**
The project was implemented by **three trainers:**
- a social worker who is also a Theatre in Education (TIE) teacher, therapist and psychodrama specialist
- a teacher, who is also TIE qualified
- a social and TIE teacher

The project took place outside the treatment centre in a large rehearsal room. Among the equipment used was a CD player, a video camera and a diary for each individual.

**B. Content**
The group developed its own play based on the well-known classic story of Macbeth. Consideration of personal strengths was combined with drama work using a variety of techniques.

**Drama work**
As the participants had no experience of plays, elements of drama work were combined with exercises to promote personal and social skills. For example, the actors had to portray certain movements or gestures while paying attention to their body language or else they formed a statue together of a particular topic.

The various scenes of the play were developed and elaborated step by step, each of them in conjunction with specific content such as confidence, expressing emotions etc.

The drama project was performed at the treatment centre.

**Reflection**
The project used feedback and discussion sessions but especially the diaries to reflect on the participants’ own strengths, attitudes, emotions and relationships.

**After each work module, the participants were asked questions to reflect on specific aspects such as:**
- How do I feel when performing in the play? Are others aware of my mood?
- Are there similarities or differences between me and the character I am portraying?
- Which of the attributes of the character I am playing am I lacking?

The participants initially dealt with these questions by themselves and then swapped ideas and opinions.
The drama project covered the following aspects and skills of the Pro-Skills concept:

**Personal skills**
- **Self-reflection**: reflection on the play, the role, one’s own skills and emotions aided by the diary as well as feedback and discussion sessions;
- **Emotions and controlling emotion**: the combination of the material in Macbeth and the group dynamics processes during the rehearsals offered numerous opportunities to talk about emotions, express them, deal with them and become aware of other people’s emotions;
- **Identification of barriers and resources**: the drama work provided a good forum for experimenting with new behaviour patterns, discovering new strengths, getting to know one’s own boundaries and barriers and overcoming them.
- **Identity and self-worth**: standing on the stage, learning a role, the excitement before one’s entrance and the sense that “I can do something” – these experiences can be very helpful for one’s sense of self-worth. The participants were able to learn a lot about themselves through working together within the group and the mutual feedback.
- **Self-confidence** when acting on the stage;
- **Body language**: slipping into a different character when playing a role;

**Social skills**
- **Co-operation and ability to work in a team**: acting is not something you can do on your own - on stage it is very important to co-operate and be able to rely on others;
- **Communication** while developing and working out the scenes;
- **Giving and accepting feedback** throughout the play and when exchanging thoughts and ideas about the diary;
- **Conflict management and ability to compromise** while developing and working out the scenes;

**Self-management skills:**
In the course of developing and staging the play, the participants were able to experiment with and improve their self-management skills in various ways:
- **Realistic goals for the drama group by agreeing on tasks and skills**: the participants had to agree on which role was suited to which actor and how they can perform on stage;
- **Step by step implementation of the tasks**: with each rehearsal, the team came a step closer to its objectives with barriers often having to be overcome, changes made or more realistic goals set;
- **Maintain motivation**: both the group and each individual actor had to maintain their motivation, even when a lot of things were going wrong;
C. Results of the evaluation

The results of the survey before and after the drama project show that the Wilde Bühne participants were aware of changes especially in terms of their personal skills (figure 10): they grew in self-confidence and belief in their self-efficacy, their anxiety in social situations reduced. It was possible to arouse their interest in their own abilities and skills.

Figure 10: Wilde Bühne changes (N = 9)

In their free format responses, the Wilde Bühne participants mentioned the following new or newly discovered abilities:

- Expressing and dealing with their own feelings
- The self-confidence and courage to express their own opinion
- Trust in other people and accepting help from others
- Enjoyment from the play
- The discovery that learning can be fun

The trainers as well observed that the participants progressed in terms of their self-confidence and body language. The trainers were impressed by the strong interaction between drama and reflection. The diary proved very helpful in reflecting on one’s own topics, rediscovering them in the play and expressing them by playing the role.

The project participants’ therapists were also surveyed three weeks after the end of training scheme using a questionnaire. They basically confirmed the results described, in particular improvements in the sense of self-worth, self-confidence and the ability to deal with feelings. The therapists reported sustained effects for seven of the nine participants. They would most certainly welcome the holding of further drama projects.
D. Comments on the training concept / ideas for improvement

The compact and intensive format of the training course, held over five days, has proved itself. In future, the trainers suggest taking the group right away from the treatment centre setting (including overnights) so that the treatment centre routines do not overly influence the drama work.

The diary proved to be a very good reflection tool.

E. Further comments

A meeting between the trainers and the project participants’ therapists took place between the general rehearsal and the performance. The collaboration with the therapists proved to be very important.

4.2 MEKKA

Mekka is a regional organisation for promoting the levelling out of unequal health conditions caused by social disadvantage. One of the main target groups are the Roma living in the town of Nyiregyház.

To give a concrete example of what a Pro-Skills training course schedule can look like, the following project description contains a detailed training programme. Reference is also made to particular exercises in the Pro-Skills toolbox that were used in the process.

A. Framework

**Target group and specific goals**

15 young Roma adults attending a special primary school for adults took part in the pilot training scheme.

To select who was to take part in the training, the trainers contacted the school’s director and conducted interviews with young adults who were interested. Fifteen people were selected from the pool of interested candidates.

**The central goals of the training scheme were as follows:**

- Developing abilities compatible with the Roma’s particular culture
- Developing basic skills for dealing with day-to-day requirements
- Imparting new information and teaching new abilities relating to human rights and health education.
- Disseminating the newly acquired knowledge and experience via the participants to other individuals in their community.
Time frame
The training course comprised three days with overnight accommodation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST DAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning:</td>
<td>- Welcoming address, introduction to the Pro-Skills project and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>training course</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Evaluation questionnaire at the start of the training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Agreement on rules &amp; recording participants’ expectations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Getting acquainted and forming into groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afternoon:</td>
<td>- Introduction to the subject of learning, lifelong learning,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>learning through practical experience etc</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Feedback on the first day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evening:</td>
<td>- Role-playing</td>
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<tr>
<th>SECOND DAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning:</td>
<td>- Warm-up exercise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Introduction to personal skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal skills: Practical exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afternoon:</td>
<td>- Introduction to social skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Social skills: Practical exercises</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Feedback on the second day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evening:</td>
<td>- Role-playing (continued)</td>
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<th>THIRD DAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning:</td>
<td>- Warm-up exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Self-management skills: Practical exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afternoon:</td>
<td>- Evaluation questionnaire on conclusion of the training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Closing feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Closing game</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Trainers and materials employed
The pilot training scheme was led by four trainers:
- a sociology and political science expert
- a social worker
- a mental health and health promoter specialist
- a specialist with drama training

The training course took place in two rooms at the MEKKA institute. A notebook, projector, CD player, flipcharts, photographs, paper and pens were used.
B. Contents

Techniques
- Presentations: Introduction to the Pro-Skills project and training course, introduction to personal, social and self-management skills;
- Agreement on rules to be followed during the training course: Punctuality, listening to one another, mobile phones to be switched off, no alcohol to be consumed during the training course etc.
- Expectations tree: Participants’ expectations and fears
- Forming into groups: getting to know one another using imaginative photographic techniques and other exercises
- “Wisdom Forum” - discussion on the subject of learning, lifelong learning, learning through practical experience etc.

The following materials and exercises from the Pro-Skills toolbox were used:

Personal skills
- Photo fantasies technique (identity, self reflection, self-esteem, recognising and expressing feelings)
- Intrinsic values ship (reflecting on and evaluating one’s own values)
- Drama/role-playing (self-regulation, expectation of self-efficacy)

Social skills
- Gordian knot (establishing contacts, empathy, tolerance, conflict resolution)
- Penguins on the ice (cooperation, communication, empathy, tolerance, assertiveness, conflict resolution)
- Moving chairs (inter-personal behaviour, cooperation)
- Role-plays (inter-personal behaviour, cooperation, empathy, tolerance, assertiveness)

Self-management skills
- Open your fist (evaluation processes, weighing up resources and barriers, effective process planning, step-by-step implementation, maintaining motivation)
- Bounded eyes (evaluation processes, weighing up resources and barriers, effective process planning, step-by-step implementation, maintaining motivation)
C. Evaluation results

The participants reported changes particularly in areas relating to social interaction (figure 11). Their willingness to display feelings in social situations increased markedly. They improved their team skills and displayed a greater willingness to engage in cooperative learning when their training was over.

Figure 11: Mekka changes (N = 15)

In their open responses, the participants make particular mention of progress in the following skills areas:

- new insights into themselves, self-perception and self-assessment, an increased sense of self-worth
- recognising and expressing feelings
- integration into a team, giving and accepting support
- solidarity and group orientation
- the realisation that learning can be easy and be fun

The trainers also observed an increase in social skills and a greater readiness to accept help from others. In their opinion, the participants have made significant progress towards a realistic self-assessment and positive self-perception.

D. Comments about the training concept / ideas for improvement

The trainers would most certainly organise the training course to include overnight accommodation again, even if this means a big effort for the trainers. It was very beneficial for the training to remove the participants completely from their usual environment.

The participants and trainers agreed that working on the skills areas requires more time. A training course lasting five days would be appropriate.
“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”

Henry Ford (1863-1947)
E. Further comments

A vital result of the training course was the group cohesion that developed during the exercises and which the participants continue to cultivate in their everyday lives.

To support the newly established social network, a „Chat Club“ was set up where the participants will initially meet once a week for six months to swap ideas and continue discussing the topics raised in the training.

4.3 “PROTASI” movement for another lifestyle

With help from volunteers working on community addiction prevention projects, PROTASI conducts youth work based on the productive learning approach as well as offering creative leisure activity opportunities for schoolchildren.

A. Framework

Target group and specific goals

Twelve unemployed young adults took part in the training. Approximately one quarter of the participants had a migration background. They came from Australia, Canada, Nigeria and Albania. All participants had a low income and mainly lived of financial support from the state. Among the participants was a single-parent, five people were excluded from work because they were overweight, four people were divorced and a number of them were suffering from mental problems. A large proportion of the participants had completed secondary education as well as professional training and had a certain amount of work experience.

The main goal of the training was to encourage these individuals to become actively engaged in lifelong learning and improve their skills so as to take steps towards a new occupation. Further goals were

- reflecting on one’s own needs and skills
- bolstering one’s personality by acquiring basic skills
- reinforcing one’s sense of self-worth and belief in one’s self-efficacy
- providing information and knowledge about human rights, health education, planning and reflection
- the offer to become more deeply involved in PROTASI volunteer groups

Time frame

The training course, comprising 18 hours, took place over two days.

Trainers and materials employed

The training course was led by a female trainer who is a teacher and head of PROTASI’s centre for creative occupation. Two social work students and a member of the Achaia centre for prevention took part in the training as observers.
A large seminar room for the interactive exercises and a small room for group work were available for the training course. PowerPoint presentations, a folder containing documentation for the participants, a video camera, questionnaire as well as drawing and collage material were used.

**B. Contents**

A smaller proportion of the training was earmarked for theoretical background information. A brief theoretical introduction to each topic was given using PowerPoint presentations.

Far and away the greater part of the course was given over to practical experience and interactive exercises, games and techniques. The trainer employed diverse techniques and tools such as role-playing, cooperative group work, discussion techniques, group dynamic training units, brainstorming, self-assessment and team assessment, a questionnaire and video recordings.

The following aspects and materials from the Pro-Skills toolbox were used:

**Personal skills**
- Good morning (warm-up exercise)
- This is who I am (getting to know one another)
- Family coats of arms (communication technique)
- Unemployment (strategy for recording skills and needs)
- Piranhas and crocodiles (loosening up exercise)
- How I am, how I look, how I would like to be and look (self-confidence exercise)
- The elephant (relaxation exercise)
- How I feel (evaluation technique)

**Social and self-management skills**
- Wishes, possibilities and decisions (decision-making technique)
- Recognising needs (technique)
- Practising skills (technique)
- Decision-making (technique)
- Continuing sentences (self-confidence exercise)
- I have exactly the same (relaxation exercise)
- Human rights (self-confidence technique)
- Aquarium (information management, organisation and emotions role-play)
- Feedback (reflection technique)

**C. Evaluation results**

The survey showed that it was possible to arouse interest among the participants in their own abilities and skills (figure 12). They learned new abilities with regard to planning projects. It was possible significantly to increase their belief in their own ability to exercise control over their learning processes.
The participants mentioned the following new skills in their open answers:
- new experiences and lessons learned about themselves
- positive thinking and focusing on their own strengths
- recognising and expressing feelings and fears
- openly expressing one’s own viewpoint and standing up for their own interests

The trainers and observers noted that the participants became more self-confident and developed a more positive attitude towards life. What the trainers and observers identified as being particularly important was that the participants’ motivation to take part in adult education was aroused and it was possible to persuade a number of participants to become involved of their own volition.

D. Comments about the training concept / ideas for improvement

Trainers and participants agreed that such an interactive seminar requires more time. The participants requested that the training be continued and additional personal counselling provided. It became clear that the training course was only a starting point and that the target group requires further support.

For most of the participants this was the first time they had taken part in an interactive seminar and their assessment of this form of adult education was very positive.

E. Further comments

A major concern for participants was to find another job. In the short time available, the seminar could not of course fulfil this wish. An insurance company which had heard about the training course in the press did however declare its willingness to offer some of the participants a job as insurance representatives.

Three of the participants took part immediately in a further seminar for unsalaried PROTASI members and are now active volunteers for the organisation.
4.4 Hochschule Fulda, University of Applied Science

Hochschule Fulda, University of Applied Science teamed up with the Seminar für Berufliche Bildung (sbb) (Seminar for Vocational Training) to stage this training course. Sbb is an organisation that prepares and qualifies long-term unemployed young adults to embark on training or a job on the regular job market.

In this case, elements of the Pro-Skills training concept were incorporated into an existing, ongoing education programme. This made particular use of sporting and exercise-related elements.

A. Framework

Target group and specific goals
Three groups each of 16 young adults aged between 18 and 30 undergo the sbb education programme each year. Approximately half of the participants have a migration background. They come from Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Afghanistan, Albania, Spain, Eritrea and the USA. The participants’ educational standard varies considerably; a number of them have already completed a course of training in the most diverse occupational fields.

Numerous participants are struggling with problems because of poor nutritional habits and a lack of sporting activity. As a result, many are overweight and tend to have insufficient stamina. Number of participants are classified as physically and/or mentally impaired.

Time frame
The sports course took place between March and August and was offered continuously once a week. It involved 1.5 – 2.5 hours per week as well as taking part in a number of special sporting events.

Trainers and materials employed
The training was conducted by one or two trainers who were trained social education workers or sports scientists.

The training took place at Fulda University of Applied Sciences’ sports facilities. A wide range of sports and games equipment was used.

B. Contents

The training was based on sports exercises and games, including from the experiential education arena. Cooperative and experience-based learning techniques were used during the modules. The trainer played the role of instructor and moderator and provided safety related support for experiential education modules.

The particular intention was to convey to the participants the enjoyment of a shared sporting activity.
Social skills
As a large proportion of the participants exhibited shortcomings in their social behaviour (e.g. behaviour within a group, lack of consideration for other people, not obeying rules, a low frustration threshold etc), the training emphasised teaching social skills through play. The participants were helped to engage with others and communicate and cooperate with them. Through sport, the participants are acquainted with many and varied social learning experiences, such as accepting and abiding by the rules of the game, showing consideration for one’s partner; they learn to set aside their own needs once in a while or not immediately respond to setbacks with aggression and a negative attitude.

To promote and improve the participants’ social skills the sports’ offering initially focussed on cooperative games that recur constantly throughout the project. Particular importance was placed on the participants accepting and abiding by rules without constantly discussing the meaning, or otherwise, of the rules as this point is one of the biggest communication blockages for many of the participants.

Personal skills
As social behaviour develops out of perception, motor activity, bodily awareness and experiencing success, personal skills were promoted and the participants’ self-confidence reinforced.

C. Evaluation results
For organisational reasons, the participants in this pilot training scheme did not complete the evaluation questionnaire.

In the trainers’ estimation, the cooperative learning techniques exposed the participants to numerous good experiences. Self-confidence and consideration for others were strengthened.

D. Comments about the training concept / ideas for improvement
Unfortunately Sbb is currently in a state of structural upheaval and a lack of manpower resources mean that the Pro-Skills training cannot be continued. However a number of different (state and non-governmental) organisations have already shown interest in implementing the concept.

E. Further comments
Close collaboration between the different professional groups is indispensable for successful implementation of this sport and health-oriented approach. Games, sport and exercises enable the participants to garner numerous new experiences at an emotional and social level. Nonverbal communication, which plays a crucial role here, overcomes many barriers.
4.5 Conclusion

As a result of the diversity of the target groups and settings, each pilot training scheme took on an identity all of its own. Aspects of the Pro-Skills training concept came into play with different degrees of emphasis and could thus be checked for their applicability.

Training context

It was possible to implement one of the pilot training schemes over an extended period by embedding it in an existing educational offering. For organisational reasons, the three other pilot training schemes took place in the form of condensed training courses lasting a number of days. The trainers and participants involved in the condensed training courses agreed that the timeframe was too short and that continuous work on the course content is required. However it also became apparent that the condensed training courses resulted in highly intense learning processes, which in turn was positively received. In retrospect, what appears to make sense is continuous training over a sustained period opening with a multi day, intensive kick-off meeting.

Trainers

All the trainers possessed a solid educational training and previous experience with the target group.

The need for a training team comprising a number of individuals was confirmed. Whereas two of the training teams divided the tasks according to their expertise and took it in turns to work, in each of the other two training courses one trainer took the main responsibility. The other trainers supported him and stepped up their involvement in the observer role in order to recognise and address group processes. The value of these observers was considerable; but, as expected, running the training courses was a great strain on the trainers bearing the brunt of the responsibility.

Participants

Three widely distributed groups of socially disadvantaged individuals took part in the pilot training schemes, namely former drug users, unemployed and Roma, the participants in the vocational preparation education programme in Fulda also being to a large extent socially disadvantaged as a result of their migration background and physical and mental impairments.

All the participants took part in the training courses on a voluntary basis and were given detailed prior information about their content and goals. One-to-one discussions were held in advance with the participants in the three condensed training courses in order to record their motives and expectations.

Content and methods

The pilot training schemes had a different focus in terms of content and methodology.

The Wilde Bühne drama project places particular emphasis on the issue of identity and on communicating social skills. In the process, the drama work proved to be a very suitable vehicle. By engaging with the characters in the play and the reflection modules, aided by the diary, it was possible to work very intensively on reflecting on one’s own identity and the emotions that go
with it. At the same time, working on the play together and performing together on the stage offered numerous points of contact for training social skills in terms of cooperative learning. The diary and reflection modules were the tools used to deliver the experience based learning approach. The participants were initially introduced to the play and the drama exercises purely from the theatrical perspective but were then able, based on their experiences, to reflect on their own behaviour as well as aspects of their personality and acquire new experiences and insights.

The **MEKKA** organisation’s pilot training scheme for young Roma confronted the particular challenge of working with a target group inherently possessing a very strong culture and values of its own but which is also confronted with its dissimilarity day in day out and is very much aware of it. It was very beneficial for this pilot training scheme that the trainers possessed many years of practical experience with the target group and that a female trainer - playing more of an observer role – was herself a member of the Roma group. The training course focused strongly on cooperative learning and worked on imparting social skills via the emerging group processes. Linked to the Roma culture and because the participants stayed overnight at the event venue and experienced the entire daily routine together, a strong group cohesion was able to establish itself that has endured beyond the training course and offers the participants a new social resource. Although many participants did not know one another before the training course, a mutual openness and good feedback culture soon developed which in turn provided fertile ground for working on their own individual selves and made a vital contribution to reinforcing individuals’ sense of self-worth.

The focus of the **PROTASI** pilot training scheme was on personal and self-management skills. It became necessary during the training to step up the work on self perception and the participants’ inner attitude towards self-regulating learning. Low self-esteem and a low expectation of self-efficacy proved to be the biggest obstacles for the unemployed participants. In addition to this work on the participants’ inner attitude, particular use was made of productive learning techniques. Exercises were staged, with a strong grounding in the participants’ real-life situation, with the particular intention of promoting the participants’ planning and self-management abilities.

**Fulda University of Applied Sciences** in particular was able to cultivate the participants’ social skills through the medium of sport and exercise combined with cooperative and experience-based learning elements. Play was used to work intensively on the participants’ cooperation and conflict skills and practise compliance with rules - skills areas which are crucial in deciding whether the clientele of pre-vocational education initiatives are placed in training or work or not. Cooperation between specialists from different professions from the education, sport and health sectors was particularly important for this pilot training scheme and what it was trying to achieve.

**Training scheme results**
Given the limited time available, it was clear from the outset that for many participants the training courses were „only“ the starting point and that to have a lasting effect, continuous training would have been necessary over an extended period. The evaluation results did however
make it plain that even these short interventions achieved definite effects, in particular in terms of the participants’ attitude towards the issue of adult education and their own self perception. But in terms of practical skills as well, effects of the training were readily apparent. It was possible to prove that the drama project achieved medium-term effects as well by questioning the therapists a number of weeks after the training. Involving the project participants’ therapists in this proved to be very valuable. They were able to pick up on processes initiated during the drama project and continue them after the training course, thus promoting the sustainability of the training courses. For the participants in the condensed training schemes in Hungary and Greece as well supporting and counselling offerings are available so that the participants are not left to their own devices with their new insights and the development and change processes that have been initiated. For the participants in Fulda, this sort of support was already ensured as a result of being embedded in the pre-vocational education initiative.

The fact that all the participants without exception responded with surprise and positively to the learning techniques and approaches employed reflects just how infrequently these approaches continue to be used in conventional education establishments. But it also highlights that these approaches offer attractive and effective tools for introducing the socially disadvantaged - and what is more any learner! - to learning in a positive way and are capable of supporting them in their personal self-improvement.
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The Centre de prévention des toxicomanies (CePT) is a not-for-profit body responsible for coordinating addiction prevention work in the Duchy of Luxembourg. The CePT defines promoting health as the pivotal factor in preventing addiction and spreads background knowledge and expertise through seminars, workshops and media campaigns to the widest possible adult audience.

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The zepf is the pivotal research institute of the University of Koblenz-Landau. The core tasks of the four competency centres are the design, scientific monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes in the fields of education and health promotion.

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ASL Azienda Sanitaria Locale CITTA’ DI MILANO is the Health Authority of the City of Milano. It has a drug addiction department formed by the drug addiction treatment units and the drug addiction prevention unit, called Attività di prevenzione specifica. It coordinates various interventions in different areas in the local context of Milano and the regional network of prevention in the Lombardia region.
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Irti Hummeista ry - Free from Drugs is the oldest non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation in Finland, offering advice and assistance for the families of drug users and their dependants. The declared goal is the prevention and reduction of drug consumption and its consequences. The institute depends to a large extent on voluntary work.

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MEKKA is a regional body which aims to reduce health inequalities caused by social disadvantage and improve the quality of life of marginalised people.

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Hochschule Fulda – University of Applied Sciences is active in the fields of sports sciences, occupational health promotion, the use of sport to prevent addiction and in training sports students and sports trainers.

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PROTASI is a non-governmental organisation that conducts youth work based on the productive learning approach as well as offering creative leisure activity opportunities for schoolchildren assisted by volunteers working on community addiction prevention projects.
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Utrip is a non-governmental, private institute involved in developing, researching, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes to prevent youth risk behaviour, promote health and healthy lifestyles and to reduce intergenerational problems in society.

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The Wilde Bühne is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation. The socio-cultural forum for former drug addicts prevents addiction using drama work, works with addicts, youths, teachers and parents on the subject of identity.

Cooperation partners:

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The Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (FSEA) is a federation of organisations involved in general and vocational adult education. Its members include private and state schools, associations, people in charge of adult education at canton level, company training departments as well as individuals involved in adult education. FSEA supports cooperation between adult education organisations, promotes public awareness of the importance of adult education and supports the federation’s members in implementing their activities.


You find references to further literature and internet links at our homepage www.pro-skills.eu!
TRAINING CONCEPT

for the promotion of social and personal skills in socially disadvantaged young adults as a basic condition for lifelong learning

EUROPEAN PRO-SKILLS Project
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www.pro-skills.eu

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