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Pedagogical Outlines for Emancipated Learning

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in cooperation with members from all three partner organisations of PYLE.

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I INTRODUCTION

PYLE is a strategic partnership project created by Zavod Bob from Slovenia¹, Center for Youth Activism CYA Krik from Macedonia² and Volunteer Centre Istria from Croatia³. The project's primary aim is developing new, innovative and complementary tools and models for empowering learners in the region and fostering autonomous employment among youth in early adulthood. The project addresses high unemployment rates of early adults in the region of post-Yugoslavian countries and creates a program of mentor support (**PDCAE – Program for development of competences of autonomous employment**)⁴ for empowering the main target group – unemployed youth in early adulthood (disadvantaged, discouraged, inactive, unmotivated, low-skilled, with lack of experience, as well as unemployed graduated students mostly from social and humanistic studies). As such PYLE brings an innovative work in the field of adult education with the concrete goal to find a way out of the vicious circle of contemporary unemployment (unemployability) among highly and low educated younger adults.

PYLE is in fact building on the results of the PYTBUL project⁵, established as a strategic partnership project between three post-YU regional organisations in 2015 and 2016. PDCAE as a non-formal education programme (for strengthening competencies, creating tangible social networks and testing/implementing new project ideas) has been developed first as a bottom up approach and with the innovative methodology that enables young people to actively participate in all project stages: project planning, implementation and evaluation. The competencies, acquired and/or developed in the process, contribute to their (self)employability which makes the PYTBUL project an example of good practice by itself.

If PYTBUL worked with the unemployed young participants (mostly low-skilled) to increase opportunities for their (self/autonomous/or other) employability, PYLE is working with unemployed professionals (adult educators, interested in work with unemployed young people in early adulthood, such as youth workers, social pedagogues, psychologists, adult educators, sociologists, social workers and others, interested in training for working with unemployed youth) on improving PDCAE training programme with one core aim and two main goals to achieve. The core aim is to support participants in creating autonomous employment through the process of project learning within a learner based learning environment to develop results through implementation and by using different alternative approaches in learning (transformative, situated and experiential learning, communities of practice, emancipatory learning, and other similar practices). In this way participants of PYLE project obtain an important role in shaping their own learning process and in creating PDCAE to achieve:

¹ <http://www.zavod-bob.si/>

² <http://krik.org.mk/>

³ <http://www.vci.hr/hr/home/>

⁴ http://www.zavod-bob.si/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PDCAE_IntellectualOutput_za-MOVIT_EN.pdf

⁵ The Post-YU Trilateral Bottom Up Learning (PYTBUL) was a 'parent' project to PYLE, developed by Zavod Bob from Slovenia, Volunteer Centre Istria from Croatia and Impact Hub Belgrade from Serbia. For more information about the project see <http://pyle.si/about-pytbul/>

- a) an informal curricula for PDCAE mentor training as guidelines and recommendations for diverse forms of working with the unemployed youth in early adulthood (IO3);
- b) national recommendations on implementing PDCAE mentor training (IO2).

IO1 (Pedagogical Outlines for Emancipated Learning) presented in this document is therefore prepared to improve the already existing PDCAE programme through theory and practice; to foster realisation of the informal curricula and thus increase the possibilities for national recommendations; and finally, the aim of IO1 is to inspire, because inspiration inevitably prompts us to think, to move, to act. Pedagogical outlines for emancipated learning contain four main sections:

- (II) examples of good practices of emancipated learners;
- (III) theoretical backgrounds from different pedagogical approaches;
- (IV) the possible implication in the contemporary learning processes;
- (V) recommendations for the use in non-formal and formal learning programs.

II ANALYSIS OF GOOD PRACTICES

This section presents three case studies of good practices of innovative learning in increasing (autonomous) employment opportunities for young people. The case studies are based on extensive research with representatives from all three organisations involved in the PYLE strategic partnership. The aim is to establish new cooperation among those organisations from the post-Yugoslavian region, which have demonstrated positive improvements in the areas relevant to PYLE and have been rewarded for their work and achievements. The case studies of organisations Zavod Bob (Slovenia), Center for Youth Activism Krik (Macedonia) and Volunteer Centre Istria – VCI (Croatia) are complemented with a number of comparable regional and foreign good practices that are (or could be) relevant for PDCAE, which are contextualised in the theoretical recommendations of this document (see sections III, IV and V).

II.1 Methodology

The research included: a) a focus group (FG) with employees, students, volunteers and other participants in each organisation; b) an analysis of evaluation materials, strategies and other documents of each organisation; and c) an analysis of the content of programs and projects that were created within national and international cooperation of each organisation. The main findings of the case studies are based on an analysis of the FG of each organisation, which was done with open and then focused coding (Glaser, 1987, 1992). Preliminary thematic categories were determined with open coding of the direct statements of the FG participants, and in the second phase focused coding was used to develop conceptual categories that synthesise a large amount of data or codes (*ibid.*).

The set of questions for FG participants consisted of four thematic issues:

- 1) the first issue explored the understanding of the working environment and the content of projects and programs of the organisation⁶;
- 2) the second issue explored alternative forms of education/learning in theory and practice⁷;
- 3) the third issue explored participants' employment in the organisation, in particular through the dichotomy of precariousness vs. autonomous work/employment;
- 4) the last issue assessed and evaluated four areas of changes that occurred as a consequence of working in the organisation: knowledge, values and attitudes, skills and

⁶ This part of the FG's was complemented with an additional open questionnaire about advantages and disadvantages within the organisation (participants were asked to list up to 5 advantages and 5 disadvantages on a separate sheet of paper).

⁷ This part of the FG's focused particularly on transformative and emancipatory learning, both of which are central to the PYLE project, and on awareness of (both domestic and foreign) 'good practices' of educational and wider social transformations that the participants encountered (for example they heard or read about them) in their work.

practices (KASP), which were analysed with Daniel Schugurensky's instrument (Schugurensky, 2002; 2004; 2006b; 2013; Lerner and Schugurensky, 2007).⁸

The entire research, both the focus groups and the analysis of good practices, was developed and conducted by the author of this text, who is not a member or associate of any of the involved organisations. She has been invited to participate in PYLE with the objective of developing the Pedagogical outlines for emancipated learning (IO1). She conducted the FG at Zavod Bob and cooperated with the staff in VCI and Krik who then implemented the FG based on the same procedure and the pre-prepared interpretive framework of the analysis.⁹

The FG at Zavod Bob was conducted on December 15th, 2017, at the seat of the association in Ljubljana, and ran for 1 hour and 55 minutes. It was attended by 12 members involved in the implementation of the association's programs, who worked at the association for an average of 7.2 years (from 2 to 11 years) and the majority of whom were women (10). Because the association's collective is a well-tuned team that uses similar processes of group discussion and structured dialogue in their everyday work within the association, the discussion was very structured and smooth. The FG at Volunteer Centre Istria was conducted at the seat of the organisation in Pula, January 25th, 2018, and ran for 1 hour and 40 minutes. It was attended by 6 members (all women) involved in the implementation of the organisation's programs, the majority of whom worked at or collaborated with the association on average of 3,75 years (from 6 months to 6 years). The FS at Krik was conducted at the seat of the centre in Skopje (the youth center Krikni) on February 13th 2018, and ran for 2 hours and 30 minutes. It was attended by 6 members, who worked at the organisation for an average 2.5 years (from 1 to 6 years), from whom 2 were men and 4 women.

II.2 Case study: Zavod Bob

Zavod Bob is a NGO in Ljubljana, founded in 2007, and active in non-formal education, informal learning, work with youth and young adults. In 2015 Zavod Bob received a state award for its contribution to the development of the youth sector; during the ten years of activity it demonstrated an effective integration of young people into society, raised awareness about activities in the youth sector, and successfully implemented professional and field work with

⁸ The instrument measures changes within KASP that occur in informal situations with libertarian pedagogy as relevant for the realisation of PYLE. An overview of the methodology of the instrument: the measurement of KASP changes (both positive and negative) was conducted twice, first as an open evaluation questionnaire at the beginning of the FG, in which participants listed the foundation of the change according to all four thematic sections, and then at the end of the FG when they were asked to evaluate 45 already predetermined indicators of KASP. The changes were assessed on a 10-point Likert scale, where the positive change could be assessed with the minimum of 1 (very low) and the maximum of 5 (very high), and the negative change with the minimum of -1 (very low) and the maximum of -5 (very high); if the change had not occurred, they selected the value of 0.

⁹ The FG in VCI was carried out by Aleksandra Lera, VCI's new colleague, with the cooperation of Tihana Fontana, employed in the VCI, and the interpretation of data was carried out by the author of this text. The FG in Krik was carried out by Simona Petrovska, KRIK's new colleague, with the cooperation of Mila Karadafova, the director of Krik.

its programs of street-based youth work (Bob Geto¹⁰, Network Young Street¹¹, Človekinje¹², LivadaLab¹³, etc.), programs of non-formal education and informal learning (Pumo¹⁴, PDCAE¹⁵, etc.), and projects and events for an increased recognition of the youth sector (Nextival¹⁶, etc.). Zavod Bob cooperates with a number of (youth) NGOs in Slovenia, primary and secondary schools, the University of Ljubljana, district communities, Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL), Employment Service of Slovenia, three ministries covering education and work, as well as Republic of Slovenia's Government Communication Office. It participates in international projects (Erasmus+, Dynamo International – Street Workers Network, etc.).

II.2.1 Understanding the association's content and working environment

The majority of FG participants have been involved in at least three projects within the association, of which Network Young Street, Youth Center Bob, Marš na(d) trg dela¹⁷, Pytbul, Človekinje, and European Voluntary Service (EVS) were the most represented. Five participants have been involved in more than five projects (past or ongoing). All participants emphasised a strong identification with the association, which they defined as a community (with terms such as 'home', 'house', 'community organisation', 'incubator', 'beehive', 'development', 'solidarity', 'active citizenship'). Their interpretations indicated strong

¹⁰ Project Bob Geto identifies the needs of young people (15–29 years) through a 'bottom up' approach, with the aim of revival of public spaces and development of mutual support and cooperation outside institutional frameworks. It tries to reduce harm as a consequence of risk behaviour among young people, and to promote positive individual changes as well as transformation in the society. More about the project: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/bob-geto-ft-tobalko-vila/>

¹¹ Network Young Street (Mreža mlada ulica, MMU) is a network of non-governmental organisations that strive to reduce peer violence, violations of public order, and abuse of alcohol and other substances; establish conditions for dialogue between young people, local communities and decision-makers; raise awareness about public spaces and their responsible use; strengthen social inclusion of young people; etc. More about the project: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/mreza-mlada-ulica/>

¹² Človekinje is a preventive outreach project, focused on community building in degraded parts of MOL. More about the project: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/clovekinje/>

¹³ LivadaLAB is a pilot project of the international Green Surge project (<http://greensurge.eu/>), transforming degraded public spaces into green areas with the aim of providing quality leisure time for young people as well as community development in the wider local environment. More about the project: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/livada/>

¹⁴ Project Learning for Young Adults (PUM-O) is a program of active employment policies for the empowerment of young people (15 to 26 years, especially school drop-outs, unemployed youth, etc.), in which participants develop competences to integrate into the labour market, develop a career identity, enter the formal education system again, and/or for successful social integration. More about the program: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/pum-o/>

¹⁵ PDCAE was an international non-formal education program for developing competences for autonomous employment of youth aged 18-29. More about the program: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/prikaz/>

¹⁶ Nextival is a project-work based festival through which young people learn to create a festival of promotion of artistic, crafts, and other products, activities and projects. More about the project: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/nextival/>

¹⁷ Project Marš na(d) trg dela (MARŠ, 'March (up)on the labour market') aims to offer career empowerment and full support to participants, increasing their employment potential and employment. More about the project: <http://www.zavod-bob.si/mars-nad-trg-dela/march-upon-the-labour-market/>

connection and integration of members, participation on various programs and contents, established and agreed rules of (co)management and communication, horizontal approaches and co-decision making, as well as extreme loyalty; as one participant explained, "we are Zavod Bob, which means you have to invest more than just what is expected from you".

Interpretations of the 'advantages' gained as a consequence of working at the association confirmed this point of view. The most emphasised were: a) cooperative relationships (reciprocity, cohesion, community, a strong social network, equality, horizontality), b) a space for learning (a supportive environment for the individual development), and c) diversity, flexibility and independent work (being able to work on different areas, determining their own work schedule and obligations, being able to choose their own time of leave, being able to work on activities they find interesting, etc.). FG participants also highlighted mutual exchange of materials, resources, knowledge, as well as overall support within the association (advice, relying on each other's skills, a learning environment, the space and infrastructure available to them, etc.).

As 'disadvantages' they identified themes of precarisation of work (and living); a) financial insecurity and dependence on project funding (low-paid work, insecurity between projects, instability of program funding, delays in payments, etc.) were the biggest disadvantages, which were also highlighted in personal dilemmas. For example one participant cannot or does not dare to 'create a family' because of these uncertainties. Other disadvantages exposed inadequate and/or ineffective management of the association, such as b) unstructured and non-transparent work (either too much or contradictory information, decisions, tasks, etc.); c) burnout due to high work motivation and 'too strong identification with the organisation'; d) uneven time management (the workday is either too intensive or not intensive enough, depending on the current project); and e) the dilemma of work life vs. private life, or, as one participant illustrates, 'Bob belongs to both spheres, so work problems are reflected at home'.

II.2.2 Understanding transformative and emancipatory education and learning

FG participants consider Bob as unique and different from other organisations and educational institutions (i.e. doing things differently, using different approaches, etc.), however they face the reality that Bob might not be as special as they understand it and base their identity on. Two participants highlighted the fact that all NGOs apply to the same open funding calls under equal conditions, which makes it impossible for Bob to be unique.

As participants reflected on what (if anything) distinguished Bob from other similar organisations, they discovered some qualitative advantages of the working process/methods (throughout the FG a strong emphasis was given to methods of Theatre of the Oppressed and to structured dialogue) as well as of their target group (marginalised, vulnerable, 'discarded' groups of young people). They also pointed out constant re-assessing of the needs of participants and the status of the program, as well as transfer of knowledge. With the support of the association and through horizontal, dialogic approaches of project implementers, each person included in a program is encouraged to complete it as an empowered, if not 'emancipated', individual, capable of planning, implementing and leading similar/new projects;

this gives them an opportunity for a fulfilling working position and existence. To some extent, participants in the FG are already creating and achieving the basic purposes of PDCAE.

The association's understanding of the methods and content of their work proved to be another advantage for implementation of emancipatory learning approaches in increasing employability among young people. The FG participants were certain that the 'content' of a program should be defined, initiated and built by its users in the learning process. They highlighted the fact that years ago, they had often applied for funding with 'open curriculum' projects, i.e. projects without a clearly defined and rigid content, but with a convincing and clear working methodology. Later, this was changed for a greater efficiency and success in gaining project funding. But that way of working is related to approaches of militant research (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003; 2005; Gregorčič, 2011) and 'learning in struggle' (Vieta, 2014a; Gregorčič, 2011; etc.); together with the participants' reflection that they use the same methods for (self)management of the organisation and its programs, this shows a great potential for building approaches towards transformative and emancipatory learning, insofar as these would be theoretically and practically justified and well-founded. As discussed in section V., *critical negotiated curriculum* is fundamental for emancipatory learning in formal and non-formal programs.

However, FG participants were unable to clearly define emancipatory and transformative learning. One of the participants tried to define emancipatory learning as a 'process of reflection and acquiring tacit knowledge', and three participants considered that two of the association's past projects had included elements of emancipatory education; projects 'Mladi itd.' ('Young people, etc.') and 'Sfurinezafuri' (vernacular Slovenian, 'Live It Up, Don't Give It Up'). The first project gave young people an opportunity to interact with policy makers through the method of structured dialogue, thereby increasing their (self)employment potential. The emphasis on dialogue, reciprocity of the process, and putting participants in the role of protagonists can be seen in the fact that the implementers of this project were called 'co-pilots' and participants were called 'pilots' (Kopiloti, 2017). The aim of the second project was creating ways to achieve a concrete life change 'here and now'.¹⁸

The FG participants tried to define transformative learning with two unprecise explanations and descriptions of their own experiences and feelings about learning transformation, and they emphasised that a safe learning space, participation, appropriate work methods and involvement of emotions into the process of learning are necessary for its realisation. As we can see, they stated some important elements of transformative learning (as defined by Freire, Mezirow, Hoggan, and Schugurensky in the III. section). One of the participants found a definition of transformative learning with the help of her phone during the FG and shared it with her colleagues, who concluded that they probably do something similar in the association all the time. When asked about the research carried out within Zavod Bob, participants highlighted action research, analysis of strategies and needs, and intuition.

¹⁸ Through action and participatory research, the Annoying Softness method was used to implement a 50-hour training of active living, the aim of which was strengthening participants' competences for planning and implementation of a concrete (and urgent) life change. Participants concluded the project with a public presentation of their life change.

As 'good practices that contribute to wider social change', participants highlighted the following: Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, Structured Dialogue (based on the Dialogue 2.0 from Vienna), practices of participatory budget in Slovenia, participatory and radical learning practices from Melbourne, Labin, Krk, Youth Center Zagorje ob Savi's project 'Say it forward', Slovenian Use-Reuse Centers, Men's Shed from Australia, and Zavod Bob's project Network Young Street.

As 'good practices of emancipatory learning', they listed the following: scouting, one-year trainee internships that they've seen abroad (when young people spend a year training and gaining new experience abroad after completion of their education), Slovenian PUM program (Project learning for young adults), projects based on structured dialogue and especially Zavod Bob's projects Pytbl, Lokalni karierni zaganjalnik ('Local career starter', implemented in the city of Koper), and Vse ali nič ('All or nothing'); the latter is based on theatrical pedagogy (using methods of Theatre of the Oppressed and/or improvisational theatre). As shown in section III, this research used the practice of participatory budget as a central example for understanding transformative learning and its effects on the wider social transformation – one that is clearly needed in understanding modern work and employment.

As theorists and professional and scientific works that participants of FG use in their work, they highlighted the following: Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* and *Legislative Theatre* (1998a, 1998b) and works describing Boal's approaches (Fritz, 2012); communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991); various toolkits on youth (street-based) work (Venessa Rogers, 2000, National Youth Council of Slovenia's manuals for trainers and managers (Cepin, 2017; Merhar, 2017)); the socio-pedagogic works by Burkhardt Müller (2006); and the work *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger and Luckmann, 1988).

Although participants demonstrated a wealth of knowledge, experience, methodology and skills for emancipatory (youth) work, and a desire to create (different) practices and approaches, they lacked the theoretical reasoning and confidence that are essential for critical reflection and recognition of all the processes of transformative and emancipatory learning.

II.2.3 Understanding the concepts of ideal and autonomous work (and employment)

All FG participants had faced unemployment, social vulnerability and precarious work after completing their education, and some of them emphasised that they were still in the same situation at the time of the FG¹⁹. Their thoughts on 'ideal employment/work' and 'autonomous employment/work' reflected a survival-based attitude to work and life, emphasising that the chances of getting a 'real' job are minimal. Only two participants had had different life-work experiences and disagreed with the above statements, and they did not consider their current work to be precarious or insecure.

¹⁹ They had to 'decide' to enter in precarious work relationships because of various life situations and their own judgement that such work increases their chances for secure (permanent) employment; because of additional income to supplement their low wages; because the only opportunity for work was 'student work' or temporary work.

The FG participants created a whole list of elements of an 'ideal job', the most popular being a) a decent wage and regular income, and b) a perfect collective and trust among co-workers (interpersonal relationships). It turned out that they decided to work at the association because of these elements, which were more important to them than certainty and security of the job (income level, regularity of wages, etc.). The participants also highlighted c) being able to determine the content and organisation of their work (together with co-workers), d) the possibility of continuous learning (in the community), and e) working outside comfort zones and avoiding routine. Creative and fulfilling work was the least mentioned term among all. However, indicators in the final part of this case study confirm that the reason for this was not that this concept would be beyond the range of their imagining (due to precariousness and therefore dependence), but because of the multiple possibilities for self-realisation within the association itself.

A 33 years old participant pointed out that despite having worked throughout her studies and after completing her higher education (even officially enrolling as a student at another faculty to be able to continue working under the student law), the state only recognises two years of her length of employment service; "I faced my unemployment by asking for social support and living very modestly." Another participant had fewer difficulties facing the unemployment itself than the circumstances surrounding it – fewer social contacts, greater uncertainty, isolation, fears, etc. A third participant highlighted the struggles of young people in obtaining their first job, which is portrayed to them as 'unreachable' (especially at university faculties for social sciences and humanities). As a consequence, young people already begin building 'crisis identities' during the course of their studies, the effects of which can be negative (they are willing to give up many things for employment, including their interests, freedom, creativity, etc.). However, yet another participant stated the positive effects of dealing with this phenomenon: "We are the generation that was always told during our studies that we will never get a job. I already faced the impending 'unemployment' during the third year of my studies and had put a lot of effort into getting employment for some years before the employment time itself. So I've only been unemployed for two days this whole time."

Participants had very different thoughts on the term 'autonomous employment': that autonomous employment is independent of the labour market (i.e. it is innovative and has a different content of work than the traditional labour market), and that each individual possesses full autonomy over what they do and how they do it, as well as the value of their work; that autonomous employment "means an active participation between employer and employee" in the working process (horizontality of relationships in the employment) whereby both positions can overlap (the employer is at the same time also an employee) and each individual can co-manage their work and co-decide about the working process; that autonomous employment is an 'individualised' job, tailored to a particular person: "if anyone else did the same job, it would have been done differently and under different conditions".

As was already indicated in the first section of this case study, the FG participants presented Zavod Bob as a powerful, harmonious and supportive co-working community with the advantages of horizontal and co-managing working process. However, due to financial instability of the association (and its dependence on projects) and the consequent precariousisation of its employees, Zavod Bob has not managed to establish suitable conditions for adequate,

secure and decent employment of all its members. It would therefore be necessary, especially for PYLE (and for PDCAE), to work in this direction, possibly with the aid of proposals of clearly defined 'alternative autonomous' forms of employment that are mentioned in the III. and IV. section of this research and that Zavod Bob has not considered yet.

II.2.4 Changes in KASP as a result of being active/employed at Zavod Bob

At the beginning of the FG, participants were given the opportunity to identify 'changes in knowledge' by writing them down on an empty sheet of paper. The most popular terms were 'project planning' or 'project work', as well as knowledge of management and financing of the association, including marketing and social networks. The analysis of the predetermined indicators that the participants evaluated at the end of the FG shows similar results (see Table 1) with the first indicator being the highest-ranked based on all KASP areas. The third indicator in Table 1 coincides with the self-identified change in knowledge in the fields of pedagogy, andragogy, special needs pedagogy and psychology, which was the fourth most common self-identified change that occurred because of the participants' work at the association (after methods of Theatre of the Oppressed). Knowledge in the area of group work and team building, as well as knowledge of NGOs in the youth sector, are most likely higher than indicated in the FG (according to the rest of the analysis and the observation of the author); this is an important factor both for emancipatory learning at the association and for emancipatory employment practices. A number of other concrete changes were identified, related to personal development of an individual as well as to his or her work (e.g. knowledge of the use of public spaces, career guidance, etc.).

	Table 1: Knowledge change	Average increase
1	gain new knowledge of writing project applications	4.7
2	knowledge of management, leadership and work in NGOs	4.3
3	Introduce a new practice in education (explain/ name it) ²⁰	2.1
4	knowledge of management of international projects	1.5

In the 'changes in values and attitudes' that occurred because of the participants' work at the association (see Table 2), the most highlighted were aspects of personal transformation (sense of belonging, self-esteem, happiness, self-expression, self-affirmation), followed by a changed understanding of their profession and education, and positive perception regarding their own employment. The predetermined indicators demonstrated a completely different hierarchy of changes in values and attitudes, which was not mentioned in the self-identified changes in this area; rather, they wrote down general values they were expected to acquire such as strengthening solidarity, tolerance and responsibility. Tolerance is also strongly emphasised in Table 2, but only at 9th place. When asked to identify the groups of people they enhanced tolerance towards, one of the participants wrote "everybody, because I appreciate myself more now", and others mentioned young people, activists, co-workers, teachers, and people with

²⁰ Participants mentioned: practice of legislative theatre, project Prikaz, experiential learning, preventive outreach work, street-based work, community work, action research, annoying softness method (training for active living in the frame of street-based youth work).

fewer opportunities. Among other self-identified values and attitudes they mentioned "taking care of myself and setting personal boundaries" and "reciprocity between work and free time". Self-identified values and attitudes that were mentioned only once were 'encouraging the independence of young people' and 'democracy of the organisation'. The transformation of values and attitudes shows that the participants in Zavod Bob do experience significant personal transformations that could also lead to transformative learning within the association.

	Table 2: Values and attitudes change	Average increase
1	sense of belonging	3.8
2	strengthened self-confidence	3.4
3	I am now happier than before	3.4
4	I feel that I can express myself	3.2
5	self-affirmation	3.2
6	ability to look differently at my profession	3.1
7	changed understanding/perception of »education«	2.9
8	more optimistic about the possibility of my own employment in the future	2.9
9	enhanced respect for some (groups of) people (identify the group(s))	2.6
10	I changed my perception of the world and of my role in the world	2.5
11	more critical of society and politics	2.4
12	I now trust more easily than before	2.2
13	changed views on the issues of unemployment	2.1
14	changed attitude towards learning	1.5
15	appreciate people with learning difficulties more	1.2

All the predetermined indicators measuring 'changes in skills' (see Table 3) were highly rated (≥ 2). Besides obtaining and managing projects, participants also improved other skills such as conflict resolution, participating in a discussion, dealing with problems, teamwork, cooperation, etc. The most prominent among self-identified changes were very concrete skills (driving a van, setting up websites, moderating social networks, writing professional articles, graphic design, repairing bicycles, cooking, etc.). Other self-identified changes that were mentioned several times were writing, implementing and managing open calls for funding, active listening (observation, assertive communication), compromising or reaching a consensus, and social skills.

	Table 3: Skills change	Average increase
1	new bureaucratic skills	4.4
2	experience in obtaining funding for my association	4.2
3	ability to resolve conflicts	3.5
4	ability to actively participate in a discussion	3.3
5	improved accounting skills	3.2
6	ability to engage in teamwork and cooperation	3.2
7	ability to deal with problems	3.1
8	communication skills	3.0
9	ability to speak in public	2.9
10	ability to take responsibility for mistakes	2.9

11	ability to communicate with public institutions	2.8
12	ability to edit video	2.0

Participants also strengthened/contributed strongly to various practices in their work, such as (street-based) youth work – a recurring main topic of most of their projects – as well as work with socially vulnerable and excluded groups (especially youth and students), teamwork, and a number of other practices, the effect on all of which was greater participation and engagement in the local community. Table 4 likewise shows that participants strengthened their cooperation with other NGOs in the youth (work) sector and that Zavod Bob helped them integrate into the local community as active citizens. As a consequence of working at the association, their number of friends doubled, which is another indicator of Bob's close-knit community and its strong social capital.

	Table 4: Practice change	Average increase
1	intensified cooperation with other youth and NGOs in my country	4.3
2	experience in organising social action	2.9
3	participate in international exchange(s)	2.3
4	more integrated/ involved in my local environment	2.2
5	doubled number of friends	2.2
6	more contacts and interactions than before	2.1
7	connected with others to change a particular social problem	1.8
8	wrote a petition or a protest letter	0.6

II.3 Case study: Volunteer Centre Istria

Volunteer Centre Istria (VCI) was formally established in Pula in 2012, after two years of operating as an initiative of several local NGOs and an institution. VCI currently employs two young professionals, a psychologist and a social worker, and involves 3 to 40 volunteers yearly, depending on the planned projects and activities. Working in the field of promotion of volunteering, capacity building in the area of volunteer management, and networking, VCI contributes to the development of civil society and local community. Activities implemented by VCI are focused on potential (especially young) volunteers and non-profit organisations which provide volunteering opportunities, but the activities also impact other citizens and the

local community (PYTBUL, Razvoj volonterstva u Istri²¹, Volontiranje – snaga mladih²², Volontiranje To Go²³, PORIV – podrška razvoju infrastrukture volonterstva²⁴, etc.).

VCI's projects are mostly aimed at development of volunteering in the region of Istria and include the element of support to organisations which involve volunteers on local and national level (for example the project “Volontiranje – snaga mladih”). At the moment, VCI is one of the partners in two different projects funded by the European Social Fund or Erasmus+ besides PYLE: *Volontiranje To Go* and *PORIV*. VCI's role in these projects is to provide education and mentoring support for the volunteer coordinators in the area of quality volunteer management, and to promote the values and benefits of volunteering.

In the creation and implementation of activities, VCI collaborates with different stakeholders, such as non-governmental organisations dealing with various target groups and issues (youth, social inclusion, environment, health, leisure, etc.), public institutions in the field of education and social welfare, and local governments. Recognised for their achievements, VCI was financed for their work by the Region of Istria. It is also mentioned in different county-level strategic documents, and a representative of VCI is a member of Social Welfare Council of the Region of Istria.

II.3.1 Understanding the VCI's content and working environment

VCI was established as a grassroots organisation based on the need to improve the quality of the process of recruitment and management of volunteers, and capacity building in the field of volunteering. The employees of organisations which founded VCI (some of them were part of the focus group) said that they tend to continue collaboration and partnership with VCI for several reasons. Firstly, they emphasised that VCI is the only county-level volunteer centre in Istria, and is as such in the position to implement the activities and provide support to different local communities in the Region of Istria. They agreed that VCI had a lot of expertise and aimed to provide education and support in the field of volunteer management for volunteer coordinators in situations where different projects and different partnerships across Istria region allowed a greater number of key stakeholders to be involved. As other reasons for continuous collaboration with VCI, the organisations mentioned one of the target groups of VCI's activities, which are young people, and the “quality partner relationship”, which is seen in the

²¹ “Razvoj volonterstva u Istri” (*Development of Volunteering in Istria*) is a project funded by Istria County which aims to contribute to the development of volunteering in Istria through increasing the number of volunteers and volunteering organisations in Istria and through raising the quality of work with volunteers.

²² “Volontiranje – snaga mladih” (*Volunteering – Youth Power*) is a project funded by City of Pula which aims to promote and develop volunteering through informing youth in the age between 15 and 29 about positive outcomes of volunteering and about local volunteering opportunities. One of the activities in this project is also “Klub mladih volontera” (*Youth Volunteer Club*). More about the Club: <http://vci.hr/hr/aktivnosti/klub-mladih-volontera/>

²³ “Volontiranje To Go” (*Volunteering To Go*) is a project funded by European Social Fund which aims at building capacity of schools and other non-profit organisations in the field of volunteer management to contribute to the greater engagement of high school students in the volunteering activities in the local community. More about the project: <http://vci.hr/hr/aktivnosti/volontiranje-go/>

²⁴ “Podrška razvoju infrastrukture volonterstva” (*Developmental Support to the Infrastructure of Volunteering*) is also funded by European Social Fund and aims at building capacity of volunteer organizers and of local volunteer centres (VCI), which will allow for a greater network of organisations involving volunteers to be established. More about the project: <http://vci.hr/hr/aktivnosti/poriv/>

context of equal participation in the process of decision making, clear division of obligations and tasks, which combined with the expertise leads to quality results. Also, they noticed that “people stay involved with VCI’s activities because of the good relations with VCI’s employees and volunteers”. FG participants described founders of VCI’s as “experts and enthusiasts, which is the fact that attracts young and ambitious people to the organisation”. Besides that, FG participants agreed that VCI provides quality mentor support to VCI’s young volunteers, which allows youngsters to shift from the volunteering position to the position of employees. Participants of FG described mentor support as a “careful, supporting, engaged, detailed, empowering, direct and consistent relationship with young people which contributes to the sense of competence and importance in mentees”.

Among ‘advantages’ of collaborating with VCI, FG participants stated a) “the possibility of continuous learning process”, b) “improving personal and organisational capacities” by participating in different educational programs, and c) diversity and flexibility of work. They agreed that, due to its interdisciplinarity, volunteering as a field of work allows creativity and innovative practices to be implemented. Other factors that enable a continuous learning process were the working environment, which is “team-based, stimulating, positive, flexible and supportive” and “networking possibilities” which provide the collaborators opportunities for better mutual understanding, social learning, knowledge/skills exchange, appreciative communication and “sense of fulfilment”. FG participants agreed that being the only organisation oriented towards volunteering regulations and education for the whole Region of Istria allows VCI to be one of the leading and cohesive forces in the civil society sector in Istria.

FG participants also stated some of the ‘disadvantages’ of collaborating with VCI. First of all, they emphasised that there is a need for capacity building in the context of organisational development, financial capacity and, also, working space: the organisation is relatively inaccessible for the service users (does not have its own space that is adequate for specific activities). Besides that, they stated the problem of “constant change of short-term priorities due to external influences”, but also the “lack of time because of the administrative side of the work”, which does not leave a lot of time for concrete goal achievements. One of the disadvantages of working at VCI which they also described are systemic problems, legal regulations and a lot of “uncertainties connected with volunteering” and incompatibility of the regulations with real, concrete problems in the community and NGOs, which can sometimes feel “demotivating and stressful”.

II.3.2 Understanding transformative and emancipatory education and learning

The activities of Volunteer Centre Istria aim to empower young people and adults for personal development and active citizenship by ensuring quality education and mentoring services in the context of volunteering. The bases of VCI’s work are the fields of youth work and adult education or andragogy, and its team members come from different and complementary professions: psychology, social pedagogy and social work. The team members also differ in the amount of experience working with youngsters and adults, which allows mutual learning (peer learning) by observation, and contributes to sharing and improving of specific knowledge and skills for every team member. In relation to both team members and beneficiaries (young and adult people in the roles of volunteers, participants) the Glasser’s choice theory (Glasser, 1998)

and Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) are incorporated into educational and mentoring activities.

In their direct work with people, team members approach with a deeper understanding of needs and with trusting the abilities of every individual, and they tend to put emphasis on the *Seven caring habits* (supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting, negotiating differences), as well as on the process of experiential learning, in which the tendency is to establish a safe environment for individuals to gain concrete experience and make reflective observations and then to extract abstract conceptualisation which leads to active experimentation. The latter practice is commonly used within the activities aimed at youngsters, which allows them to be active participants in their own learning process, and contributes to the development of personal relationships that foster their personal growth. In order to follow the theoretical approaches which are implemented, the methodology used allows experiential learning. The methods widely used during the education and mentoring process are presentation and inputs, discussion methods in small and large groups, role plays/drama methods, simulation exercises, etc. The choice of every method depends on the aim of the trainings and other activities, as well as on the willingness of the participants.

Materials that help VCI members in everyday work are volunteer management handbooks in general, especially from Udruga za razvoj civilnog društva SMART (*SMART Association for Civil Society Development*, Rijeka, Croatia)²⁵ and from Volonterski centar Zagreb (*Volunteer Centre Zagreb*, Zagreb, Croatia)²⁶, but also youth work material and handbooks, especially from Mreža mladih Hrvatske (*Croatian Youth Network*, Zagreb, Croatia)²⁷. Among the theoretical work, FG participants listed some authors and groups of authors whose researches and theoretical works about volunteering and youth work are helpful in VCI's daily work, such as Kordić, Prgić Znika and Borić (2015), Kamenko, Kovačević and Šehić Relić (2016), Šehić Relić et al. (2014), Ćulum (2008), Kovačić and Ćulum (2015), Ilišin et al. (2013) and Popović (2013).

Seen from the FG participants' point of view, non-formal learning programs developed and provided by VCI include a lot of interaction between facilitator and participants, who are encouraged to actively engage and support each other in their learning process. FG participants agreed that VCI's programs are usually not performed in a formal way (for example ex cathedra) and "participants can leave the program with a lot of practical knowledge and tools they can later use in their everyday work". Distinguishing from other programs is also the fact that VCI's programs can take more time due to "engaging participants and encouraging them to think and to work on themselves and to use and transform all the knowledge they have gained during the program". FG participants agreed that the person who facilitates the program is the most important in VCI educational work: "Facilitator has to be motivated to work, have good

²⁵ SMART Association for Civil Society Development publications are available on the following webpage: <http://www.volonterski-centar-ri.org/o-volonterskom-centru/publikacije/>

²⁶ Volunteer Centre Zagreb publication list is available on the following webpage: <http://www.vcz.hr/vcz/izdavstvo/>

²⁷ Croatian Youth Network publications are available on the following webpage: <http://www.mmh.hr/en/publications-and-documents/our-publications>

moderating skills, have a realistic, honest and equal relationship with participants, and know how to transfer his/her techniques and knowledge to other employees in VCI, so they can continue with and build upon the good practice”.

FG participants considered that in VCI’s work it is possible to combine pedagogical work with the research work while working with youth, with a few different aims: “to develop and improve informative-motivational workshops in schools”; “to make the assessment of young people’s needs in our region, especially in the field of free time and social activism”; and “to make the assessment of needs of youth volunteers in our database”. The research methods that VCI uses are questionnaire, focus group and content analysis. FG participants noticed that in its usual work, VCI collects the participants’ and collaborators’ feedback on the activities in order to monitor and internally evaluate the implementation and to improve further work.

FG participants described emancipatory education as “a way of learning which results in learners’ autonomy and independence”, where every individual finds “his/her own mode of learning and doing, not imposed by the social group he lives in”. They stated that when a person is “independently searching for resources and deriving certain conclusions, and at the same time feels very confident to use previously gained knowledge and skills for further independent work and for developing quality collaboration with other stakeholders”, that can also be identified as emancipatory learning. Participants described that this newly gained or strengthened confidence, knowledge, skills and networks enable the learner “to improve his/her social position, as new opportunities open up and/or are being created by the learner who also perceives and approaches the opportunities differently”. They described that through emancipatory education, with certain tools, the person has the ability to “be independent in his/her learning and can progress as a result of the internal motivation”. Also, they concluded that emancipatory education is “education which empowers the person to independently search, conduct, learn and create his/her own opinion”. The person also needs to be aware about the possibility that society could be not ready for some of his/her ideas and ways of thinking, and still not lose his/her internal motivation for further work. FG participants also concluded that learners in emancipated education “should be active and equal in the expression of their ideas”. They agreed that in the process of emancipated education, the role of the mentor/teacher is very important, as he/she “provides safe space for learning to occur as a result of different practice”.

FG participants described transformative learning as a form of “true learning”, from the viewpoint that “any new knowledge and skills that are useful for the learner, transform something in the learner; i.e. any true-learning process is transformative to a certain extent”. They described that people tend to change their mode of future learning based on their previous learning experiences, whether fully aware of it or not. Participants concluded that in transformative learning process the learner tends to “change perspective and the way of approaching different situations as he/she is leaving the comfort zone”. They also agreed that this form of learning usually occurs in “the stretching zone”, and every experience is therefore “subjective and non-measurable”.

Having in mind that VCI has a strong focus on the field of youth work within the context of volunteering, it tends to identify and modify some of the learning principles which are seen as

examples of good practice. There are several organisations and programs which FG participants recognised as good examples of transformative and emancipatory learning, based on the methodology used. Hitt Húsið – Center for Young People (Reykjavik, Iceland), Erasmus+ program (EVS), Global Kids Inc. (New York, USA) are mentioned by involved founders and employees of VCI. The examples are used because they provide a framework for other activities to be implemented at VCI through partnerships and collaboration. The main determinant of mentioned examples is methodology, which varies from peer to peer learning to peer to peer counselling and mentoring, and showed positive results in the prevention of different risk behaviour among youngsters. In order to undertake a certain role (peer educators/mentees), young people are educated, mentored and provided with other forms of support, and as a result they are empowered and engaged in the learning process. In this process (in the case of EVS for example) youngsters can focus on individual objectives/projects and be supported in the process of learning by somebody more experienced. Also, Global Kids Inc. is used as a good example based on their experience and knowledge about empowering marginalised youth to become active leaders and support other marginalised youth.

FG participants agreed that VCI uses the principles mentioned above especially in the context of Youth Volunteer Club, as it aims to provide a safe space for young people to question their values and learned behaviours and to modify them according to different contexts, which will then allow for learning to occur. Members (youth) stated that they have gained their first professional experiences (in organising, planning, contacting other people and organisations, etc.), that they are now organising and using their free time in a better way and that their social network got bigger. For them, but also for other volunteers engaged in VCI's activities, every public voluntary action is an opportunity for transformative learning to occur. A good example of learning in VCI is also the mentoring process between the president of VCI (mentor) and employees (learners) who are encouraged to work on their own with continuous mentor's support.

II.3.3 Understanding the concepts of ideal and autonomous work (and employment)

As in Slovenia and in Macedonia, VCI FG participants also explained several fundamental problems regarding the present youth unemployment in Croatia. They claimed that it is difficult to determine which one is the main. Some stated "the economy in general", others "problems in service and manufacture sector" and some "poor opportunities for young entrepreneurs". A VCI FG participant described that there are "many highly educated young people in Croatia, which doesn't mean that we have a quality education system", in fact, "it is really inflexible". As one of the problems they also stated the incompatibility of the education system and the labour market. They agreed that youth in the higher education system in Croatia "don't acquire competencies needed for future jobs". FG participants thought that something needs to be questioned when there are so many highly educated young people and yet such a high youth unemployment rate; and that the problem needs to be solved on the governmental level, especially in the (higher) education system ("government offers one year solutions to youth (with low salaries) and no one guarantees that they will continue to work when this one year passes", "The whole system is not supportive"). They noticed that even when a person gets a job, too much of their salary goes for the health and pension system and for taxes and surtaxes.

Besides, jobs are insecure, which is why more and more young people search for a job in the public sector in order to “feel safe”.

Participants also emphasised that the ‘feeling of being unemployed’ for youth is “really heavy, stressful and sad”, for some of them even “life-threatening” (“a person is questioning his/her self-confidence”). But they recognised the power of new generations of youth: “they are trying to find their own ways to (self)employment and some of them even get a job by engaging through volunteering”. Thus, stated the FG participants, the system needs to make opportunities for “good quality” mentors to be educated, mentors who can support the (marginalized) youth on the way to (self)employment and make youth more autonomous in their employment. Participants agreed that this step involves an environment which “allows him/her to gain enough knowledge and independence for performing working tasks, which implies trust between employer and employee and an opportunity to choose his/her own direction while working on personal and professional growth”. To make this happen, everyone involved (government, society itself, but also NGOs and young people) should work towards emancipatory learning for greater employability, and prevent emigration of (highly) educated youngsters from Croatia.

The FG participants considered that ‘an ideal/perfect job’ is “a challenging job with encouraging and comfortable working environment”, a “supporting employer”, with “less administrative tasks” (which usually distract the person from the concrete work he/she should actually do) and a “safe salary”, as well as a job where you can realize “some of your own ideas”. Therefore, they defined autonomous employment as an “employment where either you are your own boss/employer, or can be an employee but with possibility to also work on your own wishes and goals”, “autonomous decision-making in performing working tasks without constantly seeking the supervisor’s opinion” and “an environment which implies confidence between employer and employee”. They defined ‘an autonomous worker’ as “an employee who doesn’t need help from his/her boss, and who has enough knowledge and independence to perform working tasks”, “a person who is completely trained for independent job performance” and “an employee who is achieving his/her own ideas of an ideal job”.

II.3.4 Changes in KASP as a result of being active/employed at VCI

As in the case study of Zavod Bob, VCI’s participants were also given opportunity to identify ‘changes in knowledge’ by writing them down on an empty sheet of paper. The “legal framework of volunteering and volunteering management” was most often stated, as well as EU funds, NGO (managing, working and practice) and “project application process and project management”. The analysis of the predetermined indicators that the participants evaluated at the end of the FG showed similar results (see Table 5) with the first indicator being the highest-ranked based on all KASP areas. The last two measured on the 45 indicators list had high average increase (see Table 5), however the lowest among partners (Bob and Krik), which explains the specific of VCI – primary focus on volunteering (promotion and capacity building) as well as networking and community work (as seen in Table 8 with the high values change in practices, particularly with increased interaction and integration with the local environment).

	Table 5: Knowledge change	Average increase
1	gain new knowledge of writing project applications	3.7
2	knowledge of management, leadership and work in NGOs	2.8
3	Introduce a new practice in education (explain/ name it)	2.2
4	knowledge of management of international projects	2.2

Because of their work at VCI, the FG participants also changed their values, particularly they appreciated community work and volunteering more than before, but they also developed positive attitudes towards »youth work«, »work with people in general« and the necessity of »networking«. As presented in Table 6, sense of belonging and happiness were the highest ranked changes among VCI participants (also when comparing to Bob and Krik), which confirms high contextualisation of work and life of the participants. The other values that they strengthened because of their work in VCI, such as self-confirmation and self-confidence, becoming more critical of the society and politics, changing their perception of the world and their role in it, etc., also confirm that. The lowest changes in values have been identified with the last two indicators in Table 6, which can be explained by their main target group, which unlike in Krik and Bob is mostly represented by volunteers.

	Table 6: Values and attitudes change	Average increase
1	sense of belonging	4.3
2	I am now happier than before	4.0
3	self-affirmation	3.8
4	strengthened self-confidence	3.7
5	more critical of society and politics	3.3
6	changed attitude towards learning	3.2
7	I changed my perception of the world and of my role in the world	3.2
8	I feel that I can express myself	3.0
9	ability to look differently at my profession	3.0
10	I now trust more easily than before	2.8
11	changed understanding/perception of "education"	2.8
12	more optimistic about the possibility of my own employment in the future	2.5
13	appreciate people with learning difficulties more	2.0
14	changed views on the issues of unemployment	1.7
15	enhanced respect for some (groups of) people (identify the group(s)):	1.3

The FG participants also improved their skills (see Table 7), particularly regarding cooperation, teamwork and communications skills (with public institutions, public speaking, etc.). All other “changes” were also ranked highly, among others conflict resolution, taking the responsibility for mistakes, and bureaucratic skills. The latter stood out among the skills they identified in the beginning of the FG, besides computer, accounting, management, organisation and planning skills in general. They also highlighted some other skills they have acquired by working at VCI, such as monitoring skills, workshop design, as well as literacy.

	Table 7: Skills change	Average increase
1	ability to engage in teamwork and cooperation	4.2

2	ability to communicate with public institutions	4.2
3	communication skills	3.5
4	new bureaucratic skills	3.3
5	ability to resolve conflicts	3.2
6	ability to speak in public	2.8
7	ability to take responsibility for mistakes	2.8
8	improved accounting skills	2.5
9	ability to actively participate in a discussion	2.3
10	ability to deal with problems	2.2
11	experience in obtaining funding for my association	1.3

As already mentioned, VCI participants of FG highly improved their practice, particularly they increased interactions and integration with the local environment (see Table 8), as well as intensified with other youth and NGOs, get connected and involved to change particular social problems etc. As identified by themselves, they also improved teamwork and youth work as well as many other practices, such as peer learning, inclusive volunteering, mentoring, advocacy etc.

	Table 8: Practice change	Average increase
1	more contacts and interactions than before	4.8
2	more integrated/ involved in my local environment	4.5
3	intensified cooperation with other youth and NGOs in my country	4.2
4	connected with others to change a particular social problem	3.2
5	experience in organising social action	2.7
6	doubled number of friends	2.2
7	participate in international exchange(s)	1.2
8	I wrote a petition or a protest letter	0.3

II.4 Case study: Center for Youth Activism Krik

Krik is a NGO in Skopje, founded in 2012, and active in non-formal education and youth work. The executive office has a team of seven employees, two external workers and five EVS volunteers directly involved in the annual work of Krik. There are also ten local volunteers who are included in the work based on their free time and needs. Krik mostly works with connecting young people with disabilities and without through various programs of inclusion, democratisation and participation. Krik is striving for the empowerment of the youth with disabilities and without by motivating them to raise their voice and contribute to the society, as well as by supporting youth work and youth workers by acting in different areas in order to increase youth participation, youth activism and involvement in the process of policy making on local and national level. For the last few years, Krik has worked on effective integration of young people into society, raised awareness about the need for recognition of youth work as a profession, and successfully implemented youth work activities on local, national and international level.

Krik also provides extra-curricular activities in four special schools in Skopje, and Krik's employees developed their work with educational materials such as *Peers for inclusion*²⁸ – a toolkit on increasing the capacity of youth NGOs for integration of youngsters with visual impairments in learning activities; a compendium²⁹ of methods for the use of youth workers working in youth organisations with a target group of young people with typical development; and the publication *See me watching you*³⁰. Through its projects and programs Krik addresses social and personal capacities of young people, encourages socialisation of those with disabilities with their peers, and helps them in the process of integration. Each year, Krik also delivers long term programs for youth workers, and is one of the leading organisations in the process of recognition of youth work on the National level through direct involvement in the work of the Union of Youth Work. Through the Erasmus + program, more than 60 young people involved with Krik participate in learning programs in different countries in Europe each year. Each year four to six EVS volunteers volunteer in Krik for one year or less. The youth center Krikni has been established in February 2017 and since then it operates as a free space for young people for leisure time, learning activities and non-formal education.

Krik cooperates with special schools and youth organisations in Macedonia and is a member organisation of the National Youth Council of Macedonia and the Union of Youth Work. The Center is registered as a provider of activities for young people facing social risks by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. Since 2018, the Youth Guarantee program is implemented in Macedonia and Krik is working on the programme together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Employment Agency by presenting the program to the young people in three municipalities in Skopje.

I.4.1 Understanding the association's content and working environment

Five out of six FG participants involved in the research were active in short projects implemented in the last year and one in project that lasted for a longer period.³¹ They were mostly working within the exchange/mobility programs, youth camps and youth programs in special schools. They described their work through their personal contribution and personal capacities in each of the project they have participated in. Although they had different roles and

²⁸ The toolkit aims to support youth organisations which are not working with people with disabilities to include this target group in their regular activities. This toolkit offers information about people with visual impairment and introduces the reader to methods that aim at inclusion of the target group in the learning activities. The toolkit is made based on a two year long strategic partnership made on a previous research on the needs of the target group and the youth organisations. <http://krik.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/T-Kit-Peers-for-inclusion-Print.pdf>

²⁹ The Compendium offers methods and activities prepared for youth workers to work with young people with sensory, intellectual disabilities and visual impairments. <http://krik.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Compendium-CYA-KRIK-final.pdf>

³⁰ The publication *See me watching you* has been made with the support of Unicef office in Skopje in December 2017 and explains different methods which can be used for severe types of disabilities. Each of the methods has first been implemented through workshops on the local level in different cities in Macedonia. <http://krik.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/%D0%9F%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%90-See-You-Watching-Me.pdf>

³¹ The longest project in 2017 – “See You Watching Me” funded by UNICEF, implemented by Krik lasted for one year. The other projects in 2017 were part of the Erasmus+ program and local activities.

obligations, everyone emphasized that what they held in common was working for the main objectives of the centre. All participants also emphasised strong connection with Krik and explained that they are colleagues and friends and that they even spend their free time together. Similar to Bob, their interpretations indicated strong connection and integration of members, participation on various local and national programs and contents, established and agreed rules of (co)management and communication, horizontal approaches and co-decision making.

Main ‘advantages’ of working at Krik identified by the FG participants were “team work” and “boosting creativity of mentors and mentees”. They described their work as “a learning space”, “personal atmosphere for personal development” and they connected it with “belonging, togetherness and networking”. The FG participants said that they consider their colleagues their closest friends with whom they learn, cook and eat together, go on holidays together and are present in each of their life phases. Their office also works that way –as a living room and classroom at the same time. Among the most emphasised advantages they also mentioned “development of personal skills” (technical, communicative, social etc.), “learning to work and coordinate through team work”, “contribution to the society”, and “creating opportunities for young people with disabilities and fewer possibilities”.

Among main ‘disadvantages’ FG participants listed lack of cross-sectorial collaboration (governmental institutions) and the challenges in the system. Like Bob and VCI participants, they also identified lack of funds and lack of time (“Each person needs additional time reserved for learning and development, which could be spent on effective working”). Despite these, the rest of the disadvantages mentioned by FG participants mostly tackled the topics of working late, visibility of Krik’s work, misinterpretations and not enough space to use the full capacity because of the strict policies of the donors.

II.4.2 Understanding transformative and emancipatory education and learning

Since the concept of learning in Krik is based on two learning processes (learning process of the beneficiaries/mentees and learning process of the mentors/deliverers), they consider team role as the most important part of the learning process. The FG participants emphasised that to combine formal and non-formal education for the team is to ‘get the best out of it’. Through the process of delivering youth work, the team learns from each other and even more importantly, from the beneficiaries. FG participants pointed out that they have also improved their knowledge in the field of their formal education throughout the process and that there is an open space for them to use it practically. Krik’s team considers its work to be very much different from the other organisations, since Krik is the only organisation in Macedonia working with young people with disabilities and without. FG participants stated that they are using different, more innovative approaches that they are developing through their everyday practice to address target groups which are specific. FG participants also described their work with several target groups of young people, featuring them together in the activities aiming to achieve social inclusion. “One such activity were the inclusive youth camps between July and August 2017. On these camps young people with disabilities and without gained new experience, far away from home and institutions, and mentors and mentees were developing new approaches for fruitful collaboration.” These kinds of camps created a big open learning space for creativity and make Krik unique in the region.

FG participants stated that they use constructivism, cognitivism and behaviourism in their theoretical approaches while working in Krik (Ertmer & Newby, 1993; Cooper, 1993). With experiential learning they are increasing the motivation among the youth; with focusing on the learning process they analyse information; and encouraging learners for active participation in learning process so that new knowledge, experiences and skills can occur. FG participants also emphasised social theories which Krik's work is based upon, particularly psychosocial theory – supporting young people in their social crises (adolescence and beginning of adulthood); psychodynamic theory – understanding the behaviours of learners through understanding their background; transpersonal theory – using positive influences to young people in order to realize their full potential; social learning theory – accepting the local environment while opening the horizons and changing the learners' point of view towards society; and the systems theory – one on which Krik bases most of its work. One of the FG participants pointed out that "the systems theory is an explanation of the world as a comprehensive system operating together and being dependent on the relations which the learners make with everyone. In this context, Krik works with the staff of the schools, with the peers of the learners and their parents. Besides regular activities, many others are happening in order to achieve the systematic change". Although systemic changes were strongly emphasised, the FG participants gained less in this field than others (as it is explained in the section II.4.4).

When asked about defining transformative and emancipatory learning, FG participants showed elementary knowledge about the topic. Each of the participants was asked to explain these terms. Emancipatory learning was discussed as: "inclusion of less powerful people in the society"; "focusing on the needs and skill which the beneficiaries think are relevant." The FG participants understand transformative learning as "delivering different points of view to the beneficiaries"; "creating new ways of learning that stem from the target group". Similar to Bob and VCI focus groups, discussion in Krik also showed the presence of the elements of emancipatory and transformative learning in their everyday work and activities, since FG participants were psychologists, anthropologists and social workers, connected with the topics of personal and social transformation, but also that the empowerment with theoretical knowledge could help them in their further work.

Even though there was no actual knowledge and definition of transformative and emancipatory learning, all of the FG participants agreed that these processes are incorporated in the everyday work of the centre. The team meets each week and discusses the direction and the finished work. After acknowledging the past tasks and reflecting on the process, they begin a constructive discussion to find a solution if there is an obstacle. Based on the questionnaires, Krik's team has reached many points of transformative learning (see II.4.4). Most of the participants stated they have improved their skills in delivering youth work during their time in Krik, especially working with mixed groups of young people with and without disabilities.

II.4.3 Understanding the concepts of ideal and autonomous work (and employment)

The FG participants shared different situations about their own employment. Some of them had been unemployed several times, but the precarious jobs they had were accepted due to the desire for extra pocket money. Some of them had worked all their adult life without a period of unemployment. The third group was the most precarious; they were searching for a job due to

severe financial needs. Most of the participants stated that working for Krik was their ideal job, while the rest of the group collaborate with the centre as ‘free artists’. As disadvantages, the group shared that there is a lack of funding opportunities and a lack of opportunities to use their knowledge gained through the formal education system.

Similar to Bob and VCI, Krik’s participants also understood autonomous work and employment with various concepts. Some considered autonomous work as the work of a person “who is employed and contributes to the work with his personal ideas, experiences, knowledge, etc. to the workplace and helps it develop”. Most of the FG participants understood ‘autonomous employment’ as “a self-employed person” or “a person who owns a company”, which is in fact not alternative or different to the traditional labour market and is perceived as the only possible employment. The FG participants saw obstacles for employment both in the young people and the employers, which results in the high youth unemployment in Macedonia, which is around 30%. Among reasons for high youth unemployment in Macedonia they listed a) low salaries, b) poor management or leadership skills, c) lack of interest for personal development, d) high expectations, e) lack of carrier counselling, and f) lack of information about the demand of labour market.

When asked about the possible steps for the improvement of the current situation, one of the participants mentioned that “there is a need of revising the processes with an accent of career counselling and explanation of the professions to the beneficiaries as a way of better understanding.” They contributed this in the direction of understanding autonomous work, as defining the skills a person has and the need of qualification and usage of personal skills at the work place. Furthermore, the political and the overall situation in the society are considered as a reason for creating the above-mentioned situations. The education system does not provide enough information about the future possibilities and the employers are not open to provide practical work or additional quality education for students or trainees.

All in all, the FG participants considered Krik as an open and reliable place for working. The lack of funding and dependence of projects make their jobs in the centre insecure for the future in terms of financial stability of the group, as well as for personal development of the participants. Despite everything, the FG participants considered working in Krik as an ideal working place due to all other already mentioned advantages of the centre.

II.4.4 Changes in KASP as a result of being active/employed at Krik

As in the case studies of Zavod Bob and VCI, Krik’s participants were also given the opportunity to identify ‘changes in knowledge’ by writing them down on an empty sheet of paper, among which “knowledge about project management”, “knowledge about legal and financial work with NGOs and governmental institutions”, “knowledge about youth work” and “people with disabilities” were most often stated, as well as “applying for different EU and international funds”, “working with different groups of people”, “inclusion”, “advocacy and lobbying”, etc. The analysis of the predetermined indicators that the participants evaluated at the end of the FG also showed (see Table 9) high improvement in knowledge of management of international projects. This indicator was, together with the change in practice (indicator: “I have more contacts and interactions than before”) the highest-ranked based on all KASP areas.

The lowest ranked indicator “introduced a new practice in education” explains the weakest point in Krik’s new learning practice already identified through the FG discussion.

	Table 9: Knowledge change	Average increase
1	knowledge of management of international projects	4.7
2	knowledge of management, leadership and work in NGOs	4.3
3	gain new knowledge of writing project applications	4.0
4	introduce a new practice in education (explain/ name it)	2.7

Because of their work at Krik, FG participants also changed their values; particularly they strengthened respect for their work and organisation as well as responsibilities. The FG participants identified improving their “critical thinking”, deepened “tolerance” and “cooperation”, developing “mutual understanding” and “creativity”. As presented in Table 10, the FG participants ranked indicator “now I appreciate people with learning difficulties more” the highest among all the stated values, although most of other listed indicators (see indicators from 2 to 14) were also very highly evaluated, which shows that Krik’s participants improved their confidence, that they found a sense of belonging, that they became more optimistic, happier than before, etc. They also changed their attitude towards learning and the society and even increased the understanding of their target groups (youth with disabilities and without). As already seen in the case of Bob and VCI, Krik’s participants also transformed their values and attitudes because of their work in the centre, which also suggests possibilities for further changes that will be made within the Pyle project.

	Table 10: Values and attitudes change	Average increase
1	appreciate people with learning difficulties more	4.5
2	more optimistic about the possibility of my own employment in the future	4.2
3	sense of belonging	4.0
4	I feel that I can express myself	4.0
5	self-affirmation	4.0
6	strengthened self-confidence	3.8
7	enhanced respect for some (groups of) people (identify the group(s)):	3.8
8	changed my perception of the world and my role in the world	3.8
9	changed attitude towards learning	3.8
10	ability to look differently at my profession	3.7
11	changed understanding/perception of "education"	3.7
12	I am now happier than before	3.5
13	more critical of society and politics	3.5
14	changed views on the issues of unemployment	3.2
15	I now trust more easily than before	2.2

When asked about new skills that they gained during their work with Krik, FG participants mostly mentioned “time management” and “adaptability”, but they also pointed to some crucial skills for transformative learning, such as “active listening”, “self-motivation”, “teamwork”, etc. Among all listed ‘skills changes’ indicators FG participants evaluated “communication skills” and “ability to take responsibility for mistakes” the highest. As can be seen from Table

11, they also significantly improved their “ability to deal with problems”, “bureaucratic skills”, “ability to resolve conflicts” as well as all other skills (public speaking, participating in discussions, etc.).

	Table 11: Skills change	Average increase
1	communication skills	4.3
2	ability to take responsibility for mistakes	4.3
3	ability to deal with problems	4.0
4	new bureaucratic skills	3.8
5	ability to resolve conflicts	3.8
6	ability to speak in public	3.7
7	ability to actively participate in a discussion	3.7
8	ability to communicate with public institutions	3.5
9	ability to engage in teamwork and cooperation	3.0
10	improved accounting skills	2.8
11	experience in obtaining funding for my association	0.7

As already mentioned, Krik’s participants highly valued new contacts and interactions, but (as seen in Table 12) they also integrated to their local environment, intensified their cooperation with NGOs, and increased their participation on international exchanges. From all listed indicators in Table 12 only the last two, addressing social interventions (social action and protest letters) recorded low increase (the last one decreased), which shows that although Krik participants emphasized strong desire and need of social and political transformation of Macedonian society (the need for systemic change), they, as an organisation, had not improved in this regard. When asked to list their ‘changes in practices’ because of the work in Krik, FG participants mostly mentioned their new collaboration and experiences with people with disabilities, and their personal development, but no social or political actions or the need for this kind of activities. Nevertheless, by comparing all three organisations (Bob, VCI and Krik), almost all indicators measured with the KASP instrument were highest ranked by Krik’s participants.

	Table 12: Practice change	Average increase
1	more contacts and interactions than before	4.7
2	more integrated/ involved in my local environment	4.5
3	intensified cooperation with other youth and NGOs in my country	4.2
4	participate in international exchange(s)	4.0
5	doubled number of friends	3.8
6	connected with others to change a particular social problem	3.7
7	experience in organising social action	1.8
8	wrote a petition or a protest letter	-0.8

II.5 Final evaluation of Bob, VCI and Krik as a good practice

The case study confirmed Zavod Bob's strong potential to become an example of good practices that other related organisations can learn from, including other PYLE partners. Two elements of the organisation could be improved to enable PDCAE (Program for development of competences of autonomous employment) goals as well as to strengthen financial security and lower precarisation within the association: 1) a better theoretical background in emancipatory pedagogy and learning approaches that could empower project and program implementers at the association, as well as project and program participants, and 2) a clearer understanding of the concept, definition and construction of autonomous employment. Similar results can also be seen in the case of VCI in Krik.

Like Bob, VCI emphasised strongly on the methodology of work, relations, and the working environment within the context of broader community and region, while the theoretical impact on autonomous employment was less evident and emphasized. Political dimension of emancipatory learning for autonomous employment has been indicated, but not thematised, although it seems that action-oriented research and work (practice) of VCI strive for transformative effects in the broader society. In the case of Krik, the international dimension and work with young people with disabilities and without was highlighted more than by the other two partners. Although theoretical background was precisely explained and emphasised by experimental, peer-to-peer and community learning, it seems that emancipatory and transformative learning could improve their work with the target groups as well as with the whole team.

All partners showed deep awareness of contemporary *precarisation* (flexibility and uncertainty influencing the traditional labour market and the life of young people searching for their first employment), particularly among young and (un)employed members of their community and society, but it seems that further discussion and conceptualisation of autonomous employment as a turning point for more sustainable and manageable employment are more than necessary. All three organisations showed strong management knowledge and skills, but lack of a powerful theoretical discussion and broader critique of the system that is not able to employ well educated youth, which can have a devastating impact not only on the youth but on the society as a whole. At the same time, thinking and developing the concept of “autonomous employment”, which is crucial for Pyle project, seems to be important for all three partners for their current and further work – which is why additional effort was made with the partners at the project meeting in Skopje (April 12th-13th) to develop the concept and to find ways to implement “autonomous employment” in their local environment within their national contexts.

Among the predetermined indicators that FG participants involved in all three case studies received at the end of FG, three decontextualized indicators have been added. The aim was to indirectly measure the extent to which the FG participants pursue their personal development within the organisation (Bob, VCI, and Krik) with the KASP instrument. The first indicator measured “the increase of new obligations at the organisation”, the second measured “how much free time they have after work”, and the third one measured their “opportunities for self-

development inside the organisation". The analysis of all three organisations showed that participants do not lack time for self-development despite many new obligations that they have to do in their organisation and consequently a lack of free time.

The KASP instrument showed that all participants in all three organisations significantly improved their previous specific knowledge within the organisation as well as changed or gained new values, attitudes, skills, and practices because of their work and collaboration with the organisation. The comparative study of transformative learning in all three organisations showed that informal learning, which is often unintended, unplanned, rarely recognised or evaluated, profoundly affects the quality of life and well-being of FG participants and significantly improves their knowledge about the target groups as well as border societies, the system and the need for social changes. The pedagogical value of these kind of practices that Bob, VCI and Krik are developing inside of their community is important, particularly in the ability to create autonomous bottom-up communities, which are becoming a learning site for informal and non-formal learning.

III THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND EPISTEMOLOGOCIAL NOTES

Giroux (2011: 112) makes the point that neoliberalism cultivates a way of thinking and acting: “Dreams of the future are now modelled around the narcissistic, privatized, and self-indulgent needs of consumer culture and the dictates of the alleged free market”. Particularly with respect to education, continues Kirylo (2013: xxiv), a neoliberal trajectory can be characterized as “the marketisation of education whereby students are viewed as commodities, teachers as mechanical functionaries, and the primary purpose of schooling is singularly tied to the economic growth”. This marketisation views education as a positivistic endeavour, advocating rigid standardisation while at the same time dismissing the relevance of the community’s real needs, the needs of the deprived/oppressed social groups, cultural sensitivities and developmentally appropriate approaches to teaching and learning. “The individual is valued over the group: competition trumps collaboration, self-centeredness outmatches cooperation; and, the notion of the common good has no place.” (ibid.)

What is the value of a contemporary education system that does not address social injustice? What is the value of a contemporary education system that does not address perpetuating joblessness, youth unemployment and unemployability, and dependency? Apple (2012) recognises the discontent between the curricula and the learners’ lived experiences as the starting point to develop education for social and cognitive awakening. Like Freire he calls for activism against educational systems that reinforce, reproduce and preserve inequalities through curricula and evaluative activities. Like Freire, Zinn, Giroux, etc., he believes in critical curricula, implemented in democratic spaces that can be created and developed from the bottom-up perspective and from the authentic needs of the excluded/oppressed. This is the main goal of Pyle project: PDCAE as a critical non-formal curricula that embraces the learner’s lived experience in a form of further activities (activism) that will challenge their status (of unemployed, useless, alienated members of the society) and the perception of their role in the society and their meaning for the society.

Our efforts therefore shift to a direction that fosters cooperation (a group of excluded/unemployed is valued over the individual), a joint search for solutions to common problems instead of competition; and re-creation of the notions like “commons”, “solidarity”, “mutuality”, “cooperation”, “autonomy”, “emancipation”, etc. Interested in whether emancipatory (as well as transformative) learning changes a biographically shaped (individual) habitus, IO1 is at the same time questioning whether innovative critical (collective/community) learning with horizontal democratic processes (some of them already well developed by Bob, VCI and Krik) can lead to transformative learning that leaves a transformative impact on the community and in the wider social environment. In the time of flexibilisation and precarisation of work and life, the whole population is facing a permanent financial, economic, social, environmental, etc. crisis. But particularly youth on the way to their adulthood face severe obstacles for their first employment and broader, not only financial, emancipation. Emancipatory learning for autonomous employment therefore questions two crucial aspects of the contemporary society and present democracy: 1) the epistemological question (what kind of emancipatory learning can empower youngsters on their way to self-emancipation and what (and why) is missing from the formal curricula in the formal and non-formal educational

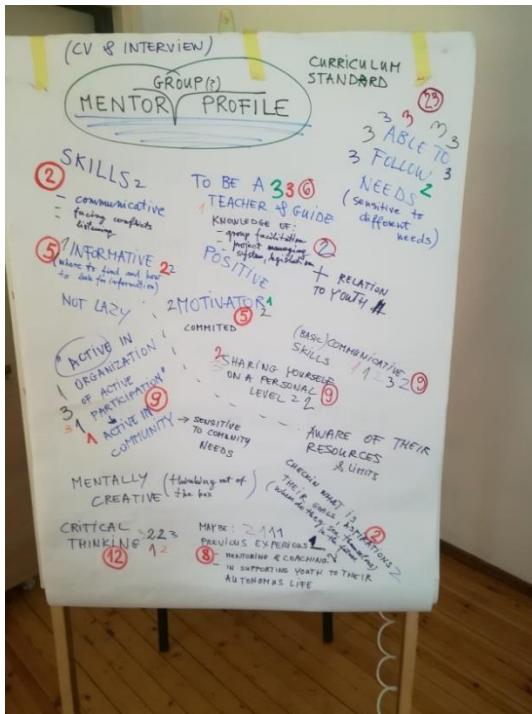
institutions/programs) and 2) the political question (to identify how (first) employment of young people is pursued by employment services, agencies, ministries and institutions; what is missing in official agendas and how to fill the gaps on the way to autonomous employment).

III.1 Learning emancipation and emancipatory learning

As identified in the comparative analysis of all three case studies and as indicated through good practices from abroad, all three organisations are using alternative approaches in their learning programs, emphasise dialogical learning and the importance of real (common / community / group) practices. Although using and combining different alternative learning approaches (such as experimental learning, social learning, community learning, peer-to-peer learning, intuition, etc.), it seems that they are much more focused on the methodology of work, team-building, and project orientation than on the conceptual and theoretical (epistemological) starting points, which should address and challenge contemporary neoliberalism and the broader socio-political context and finally show the way out of the vicious circle: in order to nurture epistemological spaces essential to freedom, democracy and social justice, it is necessary to implement transformative education/learning (see Apple, 2011, 2012; Freire, 2000; etc.) into the curricula. Because only with better methodological approaches and good project orientation it is not possible to tackle broad and complex problems posed by neoliberalism.

All three case studies and indicated good practices from abroad already identified various alternative approaches for non-formal learning and alternative education/learning. However, emancipated and transformative learning that can face the contemporary neoliberal problems was not taken into account sufficiently, because when repressive forces are at work dehumanizing, oppressing, and marginalizing people, critical pedagogues are those “who emerge as powerful humanizing agents to resist and call for a more just, right, and democratic world” (Kirylo, 2013: xxi). In this regard PDCAE mentors cannot avoid theory and practice of emancipatory and transformative learning. Since most of the contemporary critical pedagogues (some of them also used in this document) have been linked to or influenced by Paulo Freire, his emancipatory learning approaches should be considered for the common situation in all three countries (high youth unemployability, precarisation, dependency, individualisation, etc.). That means the recognition of the fact that teaching is not an apolitical endeavour. Teaching is political. “Only ideologically clear educators can implement emancipatory learning” (Macedo & Bartolomé, 2001), only they can “equalize the unequal playing field.” (ibid.)

Photo 1: Mentor (group) profile



On the project meeting in Skopje (April 12th, 2018), participants from Bob, VCI and Krik organized a workshop to identify main characteristics of potential mentors involved in Pyle project (first as mentees) or characteristics that mentors should have at the end of the project. Most emphasised characteristics were: 1) “able to follow the needs of mentees” (sensitivity); 2) “critical thinking”; 3) “communicative skills”; “active in community” and “sharing yourself on a personal level”. Among all identified characteristics, some very important preconditions for emancipatory learning are missing, such as above mentioned “ideologically clear educators”, recognition that learning is not neutral, apolitical and objective, but that emancipatory learning involves emotions, breaks the silence (conceptualizes the obvious but not spoken); puts exclusion into words, problematize the existential reality of the subject, perform critical dialogue based on cognitive acts and awakening as opposed to the transfer of information, etc.

Educational institutions have traditions and practices that include a language of power and authority, which tends to produce silence and exclusion. Curriculum often ignores emotions, sexuality, experiences and knowledge. Our case studies showed strong emphases on these notions, crucial for the PDCAE implementation. They also showed great sensitivity for encouraging learners not only to adapt to their (new) environment but also to actively change it, which was one of the Dewey’s concepts of progressive education (Dewey, 1897; 1902). Dewey advocated that learning ‘how to think’ or ‘problem solving’ should be the focus of education. For Dewey (1916; 1933; 1938), authentic learning occurs when a real problem arises from first-hand experiences. In our case, mentees should critically discuss and reflect their “unemployment” and “youth unemployability” among other issues related to their lived experiences (of marginalisation/uselessness): because reflective thinking is critical to learning, as it not only supports an experiential approach to education, but also stimulates the desire to learn (ibid.).

At the same time, mentors from all three organisations who will perform PDCAE curricula should reflect their own employment conditions before training (in a roundtable, FG or other critical democratic discussion). It was indicated in the case studies that some of them are facing precarious, uncertain, unsecure (flexible) employment conditions that can be burdensome for the group of unemployed students (new potential mentors at the end of the project) exploring the conditions and possibilities for autonomous employment. Autonomous employment is, as it will be discussed in section IV, something different than classical self-employment and other existing capitalistic forms of employment that push youngsters into the precarious and dependent position.

Father of critical and emancipatory pedagogy, Freire characterised himself as a “trump of obvious”, meaning the starting point of his work began with an examination of obvious realities (e.g., illiteracy, joblessness, hunger, etc.) (Kirylo, 2013: 50). For Freire (2000), liberation occurs through cognitive acts as opposed to the transfer of information, while FG participants in our case studies addressed information before cognitive acts. Freire’s problem posing approach that unfolds in dialogical settings is not simply a dialogical conversation or a mere sharing of ideas, as it was predominantly understood and discussed by FG participants. Rather, embedded in the element of dialogue is criticality in problematizing the existential reality of the subject, a process in which students/mentees are presented with problems relative to their relationship with the world, leading them to be challenged yet prompted to respond to that challenge within a context of other interrelated problems (Freire, 2000; 2005; Kirylo, 2013).

Emancipatory learning envisioned by Giroux (1988; 2001; 2011) questions the power of language, and interrogates the nature of experiences. The job of the teachers/mentors is to help students/mentees imagine the “radical possibilities” of an educated mind and educated citizenry by analytical tools that enable us to interrogate and challenge dominant models of thinking (hegemonic thought and epistemology). In Pyle project the “radical possibility” is the status shift of (un)employment - not employment as such, but autonomous employment, something radically different from the existing labour market and the processes that lead to employment. As it has been shown in all three countries, higher education institutions and employment agencies are not able to employ a large number of unemployed young people in a limited (mostly traditional) labour market. Critical pedagogy in Giroux’ view is vital to maintain democracy by developing students into engaged citizens who question practices, people and policies, and affirm the value of diverse knowledge and opinions. Therefore, it is necessary to face the question, what place do contemporary highly educated students of social and humanistic studies (currently jobless) deserve; what should be their social role, where are they needed and how to create jobs out of those needs. This topic is discussed in section IV.

III.2 Transformative learning for social transformation

The first scholar to conceive transformative learning in constructive discourse in a comprehensive and practical way with the concepts of dialogue and critical reflection was Paulo Freire (2000[1972]; 2005[1983]). His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* became a referential work for innovative educational and learning approaches. Later, a number of pedagogues researched transformative learning in more specific and theoretical definitions. Jack Mezirow, who based his research on Freire's concept of *conscientização* and Habermas' theory of communicative

action (Habermas, 1981; 1984), established the transformative learning theory (TLT) in the 1990s. He understood transformative learning as a process in which an individual is elaborating the existing frame of reference, learning a new frame of reference, transforming points of view, and transforming habits of mind (Mezirow, 1991; 1997; Mezirow, 2000; Mezirow in Taylor, 2009). He includes rational, critical dialogue, critical self-reflection, maturity, education, safety, health, economic provision and emotional intelligence among the conditions that enable transformative learning, and concludes that such an ideal model of reflective discourse can be found only at university seminars.

However, communities in the university sphere are formed on the basis of long selective processes that discard a number of individuals and groups (Belenky and Stanton, 2000) who would be otherwise able to participate in Habermas' 'ideal speech situations'. According to Mezirow's TLT, universities should generate transformative learning and its effects, and students should be the agents of new theories as well as social transformations (that could be recognised on the labour market, in work conditions, etc.). But theory has long since lacked institutional support (Močnik, 2012) and seeks shelters where it can be generated, developed and reflected – safe, autonomous, creative and critical spaces of prefigurative democratic emergences. In the recent decades, such heterotopias (Gregorčič, 2011) have been created by self-organised, democratic, autonomous communities of the marginalised and the oppressed, the lawless savages from the other side of abyssal thinking (Santos, 2007; 2014), mostly recognized in counter-hegemonic movements.

Many scholars note that members of marginalised groups can only enter the journey of transformative processes if they are able to establish a caring and safe community, an autonomous, confident space where learning processes can appear in a smooth, democratic, egalitarian and non-discriminatory way. Concepts such as 'learning through struggle' (Foley, 1999), 'learning in struggle' (Vieta, 2014; Gregorčič, 2017), and 'awakening sleepy knowledge' (Hall, 2009) have been studied in this context. But Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed grew from – and worked best among – marginalised and oppressed social groups, among the illiterate, who did not only demonstrate their own capabilities of learning transformations, but also the possibility for wider collective social transformations. On the contrary, Mezirow presents transformative learning as a concept which may or may not be linked to social action or wider social change (Finnegan, 2014: 4).

There is no single or predominant definition of the impact of transformative changes among the scholars of transformative learning, as well as no common understanding about the measuring of transformative learning. Nevertheless, most agree that democratic discourse is central to transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Schugurensky, 2002; 2004; 2010; 2013; Illeris, 2014; Hoggan, 2016; Dirkx, 1998); a democratic debate in which participants receive a sense of respect, trust, safety, empathy, etc. Although unplanned, many contemporary counter-hegemonic movements and self-organised communities established such privileged learning sites that provide a high level of Habermas' 'ideal speech situation' through participation in deliberation and decision making practices. Some elements of such transformative learning have also been identified in Bob, VCI and Krik (see section III.), but we can also find such practices in the organisations and institutions that are not primarily concerned with learning and

education, such as in the example of participatory budgeting,³² indicated by Bob, or even economic and social practices such as solidarity economics (see Gregorčič et al., 2018).

Besides defining what is needed for transformative learning to take place, some pedagogues, especially in the last decade, started researching the results of transformative learning and exploring the possible ways of 'measuring' or 'proving' transformative (and community) learning. Table 13 summarises three such attempts. O'Sullivan, Morrel and O'Connor (2002) define transformative learning within five basic categories that range from shifts in basic premises and thought, to shifts in feeling, action and consciousness, and finally to a wider, cosmopolitan perception of the world. These categories correspond with the changing frame of reference measured in four categories by Lerner and Schugurensky (2007) defined through the KASP instrument, also used for our case studies in section III, and the six categories measured by Hoggan (2016) (see Table 13). Hoggan elaborated these categories in more detail with twenty-eight codes, based on an analysis of 206 scientific articles about transformative learning. He emphasises that the parameters of determining transformative learning should focus more on the scope of learning than on the type of change in the learning outcome (Hoggan, 2016: 79), while Lerner and Schugurensky (2007) place more importance on the domain of the change and determining whether it occurred at all.

Table 13. Categories of transformative learning

<i>O'Sullivan, Morrel & O'Connor</i>	<i>Hoggan</i>	<i>Lerner & Schugurensky</i>
Shift in basic premises and thought	Worldview	Knowledge
Shift in feeling	Self	Values and attitudes
Shift in action	Epistemology	Skills
Shift in consciousness	Ontology	Practices
Altered way of being in the world	Behaviour	
	Capacity	

While Lerner and Schugurensky (2007) mainly deal with informal learning and tacit knowledge, which we are often not even aware of, Schugurensky (2002; 2006) also emphasises the transformative potential of learning in the context of 'political-pedagogical process' as well as self-transformation. In order to determine whether the changes had occurred at all and in which areas they appeared, Lerner and Schugurensky developed 55 indicators for the study of participatory budgeting in Latin America. They analysed the interpretations of participants in the participatory democratic practices based on those indicators. With such a qualitative research, they proved that the process of participatory democracy is itself an important learning experience for different areas of life, and that it is not only relevant for the identification of new knowledge acquired by participants in such processes, but also because of the 'way' in which the participants learned something, as well as the wider social changes that they produced in the process.

³² Extensive research on informal communities and transformative learning in autonomous communities with participatory budgeting (in Porto Alegre, Brazil and other cities and countries in Latin America and Europe) has been done by Schugurensky (2002; 2006; 2010; 2013), Gregorčič and Jelenc Krašovec (2017), Jelenc Krašovec and Gregorčič (2017), etc.

Theoretical knowledge and research insights about emancipatory and transformative learning prove that learning should be considered as a 'two-way pedagogy', (Santos, 2005: 362): not only between those who are striving for something but also among those who are in the position of controlling status quo (hegemonic position). In the case of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre the "two-way pedagogy" took place between active citizens and NGOs on the one hand, and administrative and technical civil servants of a city, municipality, employment agencies or government on the other. 'Two-way pedagogy' is a significant factor in learning for social change because there is an exceptional learning potential among the civil servants of a city and governmental administration, or rather in attempts to transition from their cemented technobureaucratic culture (Santos, 2005). Within transformative democratic practices, pedagogical aspects can be seen in the process of teaching about democracy with the method of learning-by-doing, community learning within social institutions (self-organised or also pre-existing institutions; each social institution is also educational), and in the process of democratisation of institutions, which is always a political-pedagogical process (Schugurensky, 2002: 14; Addams, 1930).

The self-transformative process among learners is also important. In this context many scholars found that participation in democratic processes grew and intensified especially when the scope and complexity of models expanded as well. In the case of Porto Alegre it turned out that engagement of the citizens increased together with the increasing complexity of the participatory budgeting implementation; in other words, the higher the transformative potential of the practice, the higher the participation. Many educators recognise that important learnings take place through involvement and engagement in social activities (Foley, 1999; Hall and others, 2012; Vieta, 2014) or in participatory democratic processes (Pontual, 2014; Schugurensky, 2006; McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2001; Salgado, 2015; McLaren, 2000; Pateman, 1988[1970]; Wildemersch, 2014). Others also emphasise the reciprocity aspect of participatory democracy and transformative learning: transformative learning can promote participative democracy, but participative democracy also has the potential to nurture transformative learning (Schugurensky, 2002: 12). "Transformative learning can improve the quality of citizens' participation in democratic institutions, and at the same time democratic participation itself creates powerful opportunities for self-transformation" (ibid.).

IV AUTONOMOUS EMPLOYMENT AND THE IMPLICATIONS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

Since the 1980s, there has been a rising tide of theoretical works which have tried to re-invent social emancipation (libertarian municipalism (Bookchin, 1982), another production (Santos & Rodríguez Garavito, 2006), the multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2009), the green economy (Alvarez et al., 2006), the no-growth imperative (Zovanyi, 2013), and more) and a multitude of heterogeneous practices such as community-run social-centres, consumer and producer co-operatives, solidarity entrepreneurship, fair trade initiatives, alternative currencies, community-run exchange platforms, do-it-yourself initiatives, community initiatives (resource libraries, credit unions, land trusts, gardens), open-source free software initiatives, community supported agriculture programmes, seed libraries, and collective spaces (housing, kitchens, kindergartens, retirement homes). Usually this kind of solidarity and these economic practices are labelled under the name ‘économie sociale et solidaire’, ‘economía social y solidaria’, ‘social economy’, or ‘solidarity economy’.

The above-mentioned heterogeneous practices might be just a few examples in the compelling array of grass roots economic initiatives which have developed in the last decades as bottom-up movements, co-operatives, or non-governmental organisations and mostly successfully coped with economic crises and even evidenced the post-capitalist prefigurative practice. Some see them merely as the remains of the popular economy, failed socialism, co-operativism, different liberation struggles, or the failed welfare state of *The Spirit of 45*, and others see them as the labour economy (Coraggio, 2000), community economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham, Cameron in Healy, 2013; Healy, 2014; Miller, 2013); distributive economy (Laville, 2010), socialist economy (Singer, 2003), alternative economy (Santos & Rodríguez Garavito, 2006), participatory democracy (Schweickart and Albert, 2008), and more. Although many inspirational examples have not been able to bring about a more profound social change or the desired paradigm-shift, they are all part of our history of practicing *commonalism*, autonomy, horizontality, egalitarianism, mutuality, and solidarity.

Although it is very common for solidarity economics to be integrated within the social economy, they are in fact two different approaches, and the implications of equating them are rather profound. Some authors explicitly expressed the differences (Nardi, 2016; Laville, 2010; Gaiger, 1996; Gaiger, Ferrarini & Veronese, 2015) and some implicitly (Santos & Rodríguez Garavito, 2006; Razeto 1993). Certain aspects of solidarity economics versus the social economy are highlighted. This question of difference seems to be important since both solidarity economics and social economies have been undergoing a renaissance and a profound transformation in the last few decades and the limitations of social transformation are finally coming to the fore in scientific writings after permanent financial, economic, and environmental crises; structural adjustment programmes; and austerity policies in last decades. The differentiation between these two economies might be important because collaborative, emancipatory, and transformative learning, as well as paradigm-shifts, which take place in solidarity economics, differ from the learning process in the social economy. Despite many similar learning processes and approaches used by the social economy and solidarity

economies, the learning activities of the latter encompass more diverse types of learning as well as much more radical and critical approaches.

As already distinguished by Nardi (2016, p. 3-4), solidarity economy seeks to ‘change the whole social/economic system and puts forth a different paradigm of development that upholds solidarity economy principles’. But the primary concern of social economy is ‘not to maximize profits, but to achieve social goals’, to be ‘the third leg of capitalism, along with the public and the private sector’, or, more radically, ‘a stepping stone towards a more fundamental transformation of the economic system’ (Nardi, 2016, p. 3-4). In the Brazilian context the concept of solidarity economy does not encompass all solidarity-driven economic enterprises, but rather those that make solidarity the cornerstone of their internal dynamics and strategies (Gaiger, 1996). For Laville (2010, p. 36-37) the concept of social economy has mostly centred on economic success and has put aside political mediations, while solidary economy ‘has brought to public attention notions of social utility and collective interest, and raised the question of the aim of activities, something that had been sidestepped in the social economy’. Emphasizing its citizen-oriented and entrepreneurial dual dimension, for Laville (2010, p. 36), solidarity economy goes further than social economy. Nardi (2016) sees it in an explicitly systemic, transformative, and post-capitalist agenda. This distinction between two overlapping concepts seems to be recognized also by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC, 2012), which knowingly shifted its policy away from solidarity economics in favour of social economy (merely social entrepreneurship, see more Gregorčič et al., 2018). Recognizing emerging initiatives which are both political and economic in nature (Laville, 2010) as a ‘force for social change’ (EESC, 2012, p. 25), the EESC opted for the hegemonic discourse of social economy, which is perceived as ‘... correcting labour market imbalances, deepening and strengthening economic democracy’ (EESC, 2012, p. 13). Social economy therefore strives to enrich current economic democracy, while solidarity economy struggles for *otro mundo*, for another democracy and another economy. Besides these distinctions, some other concerns should be taken into account when attempting to understand new solidarity economics.

Solidarity economics is not a model, but a process that arises from multiple traditions, values, and beliefs, and is often inseparably embedded into the history of emancipatory struggles of the oppressed, lawless, impoverished, etc. by diverse and heterogeneous micro-initiatives undertaken by marginalized sectors especially in the Global South. As noted by Hirschman, the transformation of emancipatory energy that begins with social movements in Latin America and later changes into solidarity economic initiatives (and vice versa) is a common trait of the most resilient cooperative experiments (in Santos & Rodríguez Garavito, 2006, p. xxxiii). The rediscovery of popular economy (Laville, 2010; Gaiger, Ferrarini & Veronese, 2015) and the renewed interest in cooperatives, particularly in Latin America, are recuperating alternatives to neoliberal capitalism with new ‘forms of production based on principles of democracy, solidarity, equity and environmental sustainability – and on a specific realm of transnational activism...’ (Santos & Rodríguez Garavito, 2006, p. xix). Many EU countries are facing powerful examples of re-inventing solidarity economy as an economic practice of excluded and oppressed which is not performed as the economy of the poor, but as a powerful force resulting from community needs, their members and the possibilities of the environment.

Besides all of the above-mentioned strategies and the viability of solidarity economics depending on its ability to create unique socioeconomic environments, some other relevant aspects or principles should be added. For example, various informal learning approaches: learning through struggle (Foley, 1999), learning in struggle (Vieta, 2014a), awakening ‘sleepy knowledge’ (Hall, 2009), ‘cognitive praxis’ as the creative role of consciousness and cognition (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991), informal learning through various participatory practices (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2004), etc. Gregorčič (2011; 2017) also observed and discussed the emergence of: (1) the ‘we-rationality’; (2) permanent rotation of tasks, rolls, obligations and jobs inside solidary economics as well as within the community; (3) formal, non-formal and informal learning, mutuality, and solidarity exercised within and through assemblies, reunions, or communes; (4) diverse consensus reaching processes within the same organisation as a decision making body as well as a learning platform; and (5) anticipating women’s consciousness, self-determination, and autonomy. All these aspects resonate within the learning-by-struggling approach developed and used in contemporary cooperatives, solidarity economies and alternative economic performances.

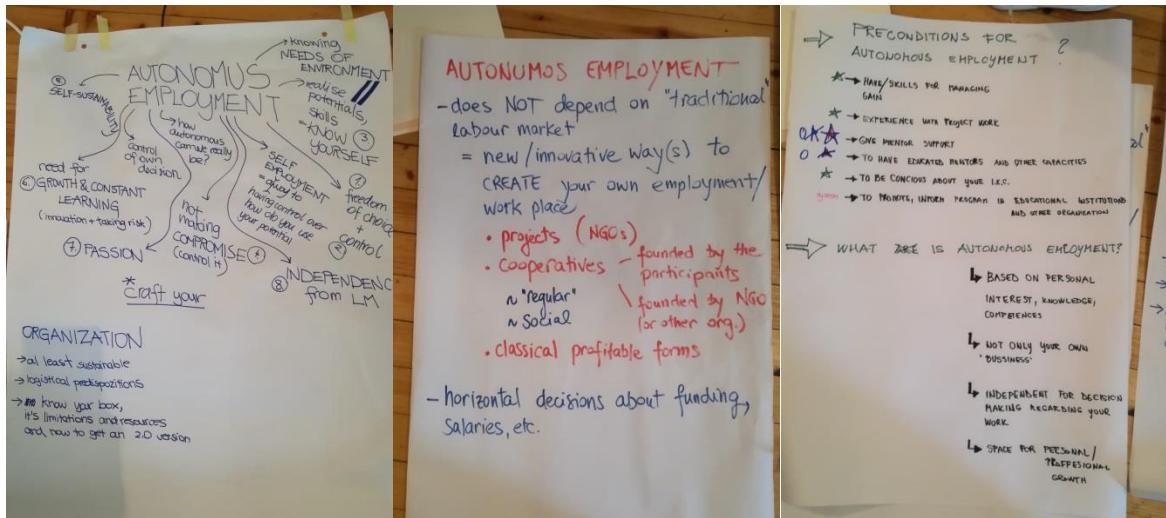
In Slovenia an extensive analysis has been done recently (Gregorčič et al., 2018) on possibilities for workplace democracy; cooperative property, rules and membership; and community-based management. Especially in Maribor, interesting workshops and conferences are taking place weekly. Fundamental international documents regarding cooperatives have been translated to Slovenian language. All these could be used by Bob and hopefully also by VCI, as some of the cooperatives in Maribor are collaborating with ACT – Autonomni center from Čakovec (now ACT Grupa)³³, which has created alternative economies (Socijalna zadruga Humana Nova, Centar za eko-društveni razvoj CEDRA Čakovec; as well as ACT Printlab d.o.o., ACT Konto d.o.o.), and some other alternative cooperatives in the north-west of Croatia. Krik is in a less advanced position, however all three partners work as associations or NGO and can share and discuss positive aspects of co-working in the association (active membership, one voice one vote, horizontal relations, and management work reflected in cooperatives).

IV.1 Autonomous employment: missing from employment policies/agencies agenda

To contextualise Pyle project through participatory democracy as explained above, with the values, models and cooperation forms that take into account “commons”, “commonalism” and “cooperativism” as an alternative to the neoliberal labour market and use alternative (emancipatory and transformative) approaches to learning, could be an unpredictable but an innovative path towards building a new understanding of employment as well as building a critical non-formal curricula for the development of autonomous employment. Diverse understanding of “autonomous employment” by Pyle partners concentrated around three individuals’ predispositions that should be linked to community needs (social environment): a) freedom of choice; b) control over your own actions, resources and compromises; c) awareness of one’s potentials, skills, resources and the way they work.

Photo 2: Definition of the autonomous employment

³³ <http://actnow.act-grupa.hr/socijalno-poduzetnistvo/>



At the project meeting in Skopje (April 12thl, 2018), participants from Bob, VCI and Krik organized a workshop to define the term "autonomous employment".

They understood autonomous employment as something that needs to be self-sustainable and as a place where workers have the awareness of constant learning and personal growth. "Passion should be involved as well although it should not be the focal point". They claimed that autonomous employment consists of innovation and readiness to take risks. The main distinction of autonomous employment from other employments has been seen in independency from the labour market. Besides legal, logistical and organisational predispositions that organisations should provide for autonomous employment, more effort should be put on "good mentors" – (necessary to provide good mentor support with the main goal being that people should have a space for permanent personal and professional growth) and the continuous and systematic informing of the institutions about autonomous employment (educational institutions, employment agencies, etc.). Autonomous employment also involves values and principles of work usually not present in other forms of employment. It does not correspond with the classical business and management paradigm and is not necessarily self-employment, but rather interaction and co-working with horizontal and solidarity relations (sharing work and profits: democratic discussions and decisions about the work, salaries, etc.).

As it can be seen, the partners from Pyle project deepened their understanding of "autonomous employment" from the beginning of the project. As seen in section III, at the time of the FG discussion they were not thinking about cooperatives or social entrepreneurship, but at the workshop in Skopje they already leaned in this alternative direction. However there is an enormous legal difference between the countries: in Macedonia the type of an association with active members would be the closest legal form to a cooperative; in Croatia the legislation recognizes cooperatives but in practice it is mostly profitable cooperatives that are active; the legislation in Slovenia enables cooperatives, social entrepreneurship and other forms of social economy mostly promoted by the EU and consequently also based on classical business and self-employment (see Gregorčič et al., 2018). However, many very successful already existing practices can be found in Slovenia (such as Cooperative Stara roba nova raba that employs homeless people; Cooperative Dobrina with 70 farmers; Translation Cooperative Consonant with self-employed translators who pooled together their knowledge and work, etc.), as well as

cooperative-supporting environments (CAAP – Center for the Alternative and Autonomous Production; Weaver; etc.) and a growing amount of scientific and other literature on these topics (see Gregočič et al., 2018).

There is a renowned project in Slovenia that addresses issues similar to Pyle: *Združimo se* (Vsi za druge, zadruge za vse; Pekarna Magdalenske mreže, Maribor)³⁴, empowering young people about workers' rights and the possibilities for employment. They provide theoretical and practical training for unemployed youth in youth centres and some secondary schools. The project addresses active citizenship through empowerment in the field of labour law and awareness of the dangers of overtime work, and encourages people to establish labour, service, and social cooperatives as companies that provide sustainable employment for young people, especially in regions with poor prospects for employment. The project also tries to encourage decision makers at the state level to create more favourable and supportive environments for youth employment through the adoption of strategic documents and guidelines that will facilitate the creation and development of (youth) cooperatives. Cooperatives can provide decent work to young people precisely because of a common democratic ownership system, and workers' ownership is particularly suitable for ensuring a more active and independent role in the society. In the project mentioned above, three different groups merged their knowledge and practices: three not-yet-connected and interrelated subjects were mutually discussed and intertwined: participatory budgeting, critical literacy and autonomous production.

In February 2018, an Application Analysis of the situation in the field of social economy in Slovenia was prepared by CAAP, which also contains guidelines for the preparation of the long-term Strategy for the Development of the Social Economy in Slovenia 2019-2029 and the program of short-term measures with the Action Plan 2019-2020.³⁵ The document contains an explanation of the basic concepts and the starting points and characteristics of social economy in Slovenia. As a key potential for the development of social economy, it highlights high unemployment and the possibility of recruiting young people and other vulnerable groups, and the need for social services, such as long-term care services, personal and household services and care services (community care). Among the key potentials for development, however, is the continuation of privatisation, with possibilities of workers' takeover through cooperatives. The analysis further identifies obstacles and proposes solutions for the transition of the social economy sector from project financing to a lasting market activity. As an obstacle, it underlines the misinterpretation of the activities of social entrepreneurship, since internationally accepted definitions of social economy include both activities that are market and non-market, the incorrect assumption that the market activities of social enterprises mean only selling on the private market, that is, without selling to public contractors (the state, municipalities, etc.), and inadequate understanding of socially-beneficial activities of social economy entities. The analysis proposes five types of business models for the functioning of social economy entities: an absolutely "non-market model" (the social economy entity acts as a contractor for a country that is a subscriber / payer), a hybrid "non-market-based model" with a dominant share of non-market activities, a hybrid "market-non-market model", a hybrid "market-non-market model" with a dominant share of market activities and an absolute "market model".

³⁴ See <http://zdruzimose.infopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/konc%CC%8Cna-verzija-KP-DP.pdf>

³⁵ See http://www.mgrt.gov.si/fileadmin/user_upload/Analiza_stanja_na_podrocju_socialne_ekonomije_v_Sloveniji.pdf

IV.2 Recommendations for PDCAE mentors and the critical non-formal curricula

- 1) Is the term “competences” in PDCAE applicable to the Pyle project? The project is developing preconditions for KASP shifts and empowering mentees for autonomous employment and emancipation. The “competence” rhetoric that already prevails in neoliberal discourses is not necessary in the Pyle project, which addresses other fields of empowerment: new knowledge about cooperatives and solidarity economies; attitudes and values towards mutuality, autonomy, cooperation, emancipation, etc.; skills for co-management, dialogue, listening, consensus reaching, etc.; and alternative practices of community work and activism besides the political-pedagogical process of democratisation of existing institutions.
- 2) Mentors should inspire mentees about new and innovative ways of employment and jobs (autonomous employment instead of self-employment; employment in businesses or public administrations – limited and already addressed by public/employment agencies and institutions) with clear identification of knowledge, attitudes and values, skills and practices shifts necessary to reach the precondition for autonomous employment. **Inspiration inevitably prompts us to think, to move, to act** and is therefore necessary for mentors and mentees involved in the project, since they are all entering a new, not yet experienced path of the process to autonomous employment. However KASP shifts cannot be planned and predicted neither for mentees nor for mentors; but they can be reflected and evaluated on the individual and groups level during the learning process and at the end of it.
- 3) Mentors should implement transformative learning into the PDCAE programme (critical non-formal curricula) in order to nurture the epistemological space essential to freedom, democracy and social justice (Apple, 2011) and establish their own ‘privileged learning sites’ together with participants that provide Habermas’ ‘ideal speech situation’ through ‘participation in deliberation and decision making practices’ addressing the discriminatory, excluding and suppressed position (actually, no position) on the labour market through theoretical, analytical and practical dialogue on alternative economical approaches (cooperativism, pluralistic economy, solidarity economy, communal economy, etc.).
- 4) As opposed to teaching methods, Aronowitz (2004) suggests that teachers need to be trained as intellectuals, which requires teaching training based on subject disciplines. For Pyle project (a project that will create curricula for new potential mentors), at least two key subject disciplines are missing in the non-formal curricula; critical epistemology (in this regard Boaventura Sousa Santos and the above explained literature on emancipatory and transformative learning are suggested) and solidarity economics (cooperatives, social entrepreneurship and other collective and democratically self-management practices/organisations) (in this regard cited literature on solidarity economics and cooperative/*commonalism* is suggested).
- 5) Module 1 should therefore be more extensive than planned, particularly with epistemological courses necessary for potential mentors (as well as for further mentees to build their critical consciousness and to develop analytical tools). Besides planned individual and group work, specific contents should be discussed and practiced through workshops, roundtables, plays (on subjects/topics such as participatory democracy; counter-hegemonic theories and practices; critical literacy; etc.) to strengthen the recognition of emancipatory learning as a political act that involves emotions, unspoken realities, actions

etc. Besides group building activities that will connect and strengthen all involved mentees in the first weeks, there should be special “events” (Theatre of the Oppressed can be used - or even better, simple assembly conversations with communication signs developed and adopted by the group: it would then be easier to reach consensus and find agreements in the further process of the PDCAE program) where participants could express their exclusion in words, and problematize the existential reality due to unemployment. **Mentors should help to perform critical dialogue based on cognitive acts and awakening.** This approach would deepen and intensify critical reflection of learners in addition to the pedagogical process itself identifying the needs of the learners.

- 6) Module 2 should include at least a week of extensive learning on cooperatives or other alternative economies – participants should explore the best legal forms to reach autonomous employment (workshops, presentations, legislation reading and discussion, etc.). Extensive and free available literature on the internet on social and solidarity economy and good practices in these fields can be useful, as well as reading of legislation on cooperatives with participants and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of these forms of potential employment. Practice (as planned in Module 2) should be performed in already existing cooperatives or in an alternative economic environment, where participants could gain diverse insights into their potential way of work and check if the values, principles and the cooperative identity are applied (a potential discrepancy between legislation and the “statute” of the cooperative; a discrepancy between theory and practice).
- 7) Another suggested topic that should be added to the critical non-formal curricula is an analysis of employment policies and plans (strategies, etc.) - an analytic discussion of misleading action plans as well as identifying and discussing existing employment institutions/agencies, their rhetoric, programs, actions, etc. Participants should also perform a critical dialogue with employment agencies/institutions in order to empower the 'political-pedagogical process' necessary for transformative and emancipatory learning. In this regard, a roundtable (with decision makers in the field of employment policies) should be organised and autonomously performed by participants of PDACE before the end of the project.
- 8) Based on knowledge and new experiences about autonomous employment (cooperatives, solidarity economies), participants should establish their own (potential) co-op/association (prepare a potential ‘statute’, define ‘role rotation’, define ‘obligations’ of members, discuss how to perform ‘active membership in practice’, ‘one member one vote’, etc.). Working hard on the “co-op” can empower participants to start their new autonomous employment under this co-op or to establish a new one (in the timeline of the project or after the project). The “practical action in the environment” as planned in Module 2 could be reformulated in this way, since participants have to get very clear instructions on what is expected from them and what kind of problems they should solve; it is important that they use the gained analytical tools and cognitive acts in this process (besides knowledge, attitudes and values, skills and practices). Instead of entering a new community and observing, researching and identifying the potential problem, it is suggested to involve them in “alternative economies” as militant researchers – in order to gain deeper understanding of autonomous employment; to get observations from insiders and to reflect the mistakes, contradictions, (in)consistency among themselves as well as with the insiders, etc. All these could be refreshing for the members of the co-op as well as for the participants of PDCAE and their mentors. The

planned action (Module 2 in the existing PDCAE) could also emerge in this economic environment with very specific Dewey-an ‘how to think’ or ‘problem solve’. Participants should identify a real problem that arises from fist-hand experiences (in the co-op/association; on the field) and gain authentic learning out of it.

- 9) Module 3 should be implemented in two ways: participants that will recognise autonomous employment within a co-op/association or other alternative forms of economy should continue in that direction (one or more groups should develop one or more concrete project ideas as planned in curricula) and get complete support by their mentors; other participants who will show interest in self-employment and other already existing forms of employment on the labour market could be supported in that direction.
- 10) As discussed and accepted by all partners on the partners’ meeting in Skopje (April 2018), participants of the PDCAE programme should get their own co-working space (their own ‘safe’ room) for the next six months after the end of the learning programme. This would enable them to develop their own safe space with democratic discussions on alternative topics and test their interests, autonomy, horizontality, etc. without external help and interventions.

V RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE IN NON-FORMAL AND FORMAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

The IO1 document was created with the aim of developing a practical framework for applying the theory of emancipatory and transformative learning in Pyle project as well as for recommendations in formal and non-formal learning practices and programs. For this purpose the relevant literature was reviewed, three relevant practices for PDCAE examined and analysed, and a practical framework developed to introduce the potential contribution of emancipatory learning to autonomous employment. This section highlights some of the main learning aims as well as the *critical negotiated curriculum* that might be useful for NGOs as well as for other formal and non-formal programs and institutions that are striving for alternative, critical, libertarian, counter-hegemonic education and learning; or any kind of critical learning that is concerned with investigating institutional and/or societal practices which tend to resist the imposition of dominant social norms and structures. It should be acknowledged, as already discussed by Nouri and Sajjadi (2014: 78), that critical pedagogy, and emancipatory pedagogy in particular, needs to move from text to practices. The Pyle project and this document is one step in this direction.

Emancipatory learning/pedagogy is an innovative approach, mostly developed by the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire in the 60s and 70s of the 20th century for adult education, and theoretically re-thought and re-considered since then in diverse contexts and by many scholars, among other particularly Shore, Giroux, McLaren, and Schugurensky. Emancipatory learning has also been developed by other scholars and from different perspectives, such as the work of Rancière, and scholars of transformative learning (Mezirow, O'Sullivan, Morrel and O'Connor, Hoggan, Schugurensky, and many others), and also by other works on critical education, community of practice, community learning, experiential learning, informal learning, etc. Any emancipatory learning discussion should not overlook Freire's fundamental works, as well as many other scholars, such as Marx, Dewey, Gramsci, and the Frankfort school among others, which inspired and influenced Freire's work too.

As already agreed and discussed by many scholars, "emancipatory pedagogy is founded on the notion that education should play a fundamental role in creating a just and democratic society. (...) Emancipatory pedagogy accordingly seeks to invite both students and teachers to critically analyse the political and social issues as well as the consequences of social inequity. This requires a negotiated curriculum based on true dialogue that values social interaction, collaboration, authentic democracy, and self-actualisation." (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014: 76) From a critical, emancipatory pedagogical perspective, a successful education system will not only resist forms of capitalist reproduction but will necessarily take positive steps to facilitate social transformation by promoting the development of a counter-hegemony. This would include theories, practices (praxis), values, and an overall culture that acts as critique and negation of corporate, capitalist hegemony (McLaren 2003; Shor 1992).

Critical negotiated curriculum

- a) Since the *hidden curriculum* of banking education reproduces the dominant ideological hegemony and dehumanizes individuals to become docile objects, controlled by power structure (Hammer & Kellner, 2009), students and teachers should actively participate in the decision-making process of curriculum in a true dialogue context (Freire, 2000) and create their own *negotiated curriculum* (Paul, 2002).
- b) Critical negotiated curriculum can “equalize the unequal playing field” (Macedo & Bartolomé, 2001), redefine responsibilities, roles, and expectations of teachers and students as well as bring to the surface contents, topics, and problems that have not been foreseen and ‘fight back and beyond’ (Gregorčič, 2011).
- c) Critical inquiry with alternative and radical qualitative/ethnographic approaches that dare to commit and involve (militant research, (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003; 2005; Gregorčič, 2011); participatory research; action research; different practices of co-research, etc.). When referring to commitment and to the “militant” character of research, we do so in a precise sense as discussed by Colectivo Situaciones (2003): the researcher-militant is a character made of questions, not saturated by ideological meanings and models of the world and anti-pedagogical as he remains faithful to ‘not knowing’ (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003: 8), ‘drawing attention to the absent knowledges and absent agents’ (Santos, 2014). Critical inquiry is ‘a paradigm based on the editing application of prudent knowledges, knowledges that transform research objects into solidary subjects and urge knowledge-based action’ (Santos, 2014: 163).
- d) Instead of predominant training of methodological and didactical skills and competences, emancipatory learning emphasises epistemologies: it moves from the epistemology of blindness to the epistemology of seeing by recognizing and evaluating excluded and muted epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2007; 2014): learning from the South through intercultural translation (Santos, 2014) instead of reproducing the conditions of contractual, territorial and societal fascism (Santos, 2014). In disrupting the “apartheid of knowledge”, we move towards “developing emancipatory strategies for anti-racist social justice research” (Huber, 2009: 650). This applies to “learning from words”, to the testimonial exchange that requires both the speaker and the hearer (Lackey, 2006; 2008), and to the need to “listen across differences” (Haig-Brown, 2003: 418). Ignored by Western science and forgotten by Eurocentric critical tradition, “all knowledges are testimonial, because what they know about social reality (their active dimension) also reveals the kind of subjects of knowledge acting on social reality (their subjective dimension)” (Santos, 2014: 207).
- e) In this respect, it would be useful for education to once again recall Boler’s ‘pedagogy of discomfort’ (1999), which argues for the need to situate the often isolated and isolating work we do in education in a historical and political context, one that accounts for class, economic, and power relationships that we both identify and are identified with. Since emotions are part of the social body and political practice, they must be experienced in education and learning – they should be used as sites of resistance instead of a form of social control. (Gregorčič, 2018) Transformation is likely to be most effective and sustainable when it is pursued in solidarity with others engaged in the same kinds of struggles (Foley 1999).

Emancipatory learning aims for teachers and students:

- a) **Emancipatory learning is not neutral nor objective but political:** Emancipatory learning envisioned by Giroux (1988; 2001; 2011) and many other scholars questions the power of language, and interrogates the nature of experiences. The job of teachers/mentors is to help students/mentees imagine the “radical possibilities” of an educated mind and educated citizenry by analytical tools, interrogating and challenging dominant models of thinking (hegemonic thought and epistemology). Both educators and students should become »transformative intellectuals« (Giroux, 1988) and »cultural workers« (Freire, 2000; 2005).
- b) **Emancipatory learning is true dialogue, able to humanize (Freire, 2000) and re-humanize the world:** Freire believed that changing the world to a humanized one is feasible only through true dialogue, which cannot exist in the absence of a profound love for the world and for human beings; without humility; without faith in the creative power of humanity. As such, dialogue creates a climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into a closer partnership in the naming of the world and in constant search for not-yet, for their incompleteness in communication with others and in critical thinking (Freire, 2000). Thus emancipatory learning performs critical dialogue based on cognitive acts and awakening as opposed to the transfer of information.
- c) **Emancipatory learning is critical conscientisation (Freire, 2000):** authentic learning is the manifestation of “conscientisation”. Breaking down the “silence culture” requires true dialogue and critical conscientisation that questions the underlying causes of oppression (Freire, 1970). Critical literacy is a precondition for critical thinking (Freire et al.; Luke, 2000; etc.). Authentic learning occurs only when a real problem arises from first-hand experiences (Dewey, 1916; 1933; 1938); thus learning programmes should consist of present, existential, concrete situations that reflect the aspiration of everyone involved (Freire, 2000).
- d) **Emancipatory learning itself is creation of counter-power practices:** learning does not only change power relationships (in the classroom/in society) with the horizontal or bottom-up dialogue and recall muted realities through ‘pedagogy of questioning’, but it is creating/producing/envisioning a counter-hegemonic culture, praxis and theories (McLaren, 2003; Shor, 1992). It moves from knowledge-as-regulation to knowledge-as-emancipation (Santos, 2014).
- e) **Emancipatory learning unconditionally involves naming and feeling – pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999):** to break the silence and put exclusion, oppression into words; emotions are not only allowed but crucial for the re-humanisation of the world. It is necessary ‘to draw attention to absent knowledges and absent agents’ (Santos, 2014: 163) and ‘to learn the new language of struggle and, by learning, to participate in its formation’ (Holloway, 2010: 12-13)
- f) **Since no one educates anyone and no one educates themselves alone (Freire, 2000), emancipatory learning necessarily creates communities, which can become powerful learning sites:** often forgotten, but crucial to learning, is that it creates communities, although many times unintentionally and unconsciously (see

Schugurensky, 2000; 2006a; 2010), as well as unintentional, unconscious informal or even transformative learning (Schugurensky, 2000; 2006a; 2010).

- g) **Emancipatory learning discovers reality through 'problem-posing' learning/education (Freire, 2000):** a dialogical theory of praxis and knowledge and a revised relationship between teachers and students. Existential, concrete, present situations should be posed as a problem which challenges everyone involved and requires intellectual response as well as action, praxis.
- h) **Emancipatory learning always includes some aspects of transformative learning:** the self-transformative process among learners is also important. In this context many scholars found out that participation in democratic processes grew and intensified especially when the scope and complexity of democratic and participatory models expanded as well. Many educators recognise that important learning takes place through involvement and engagement in social activities (Foley, 1999; Hall and others, 2012; Vieta, 2014) or in participatory democratic processes (Pontual, 2014; Schugurensky, 2006a; McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2001; Salgado, 2015; McLaren, 2000; Pateman, 1988[1970]; Wildemersch, 2014). Others also emphasise the reciprocity aspect of participatory democracy and transformative learning: transformative learning can promote participative democracy, but participative democracy also has the potential to nurture transformative learning (Schugurensky, 2002: 12). **Transformative learning improves the quality of citizens' participation in democratic institutions, and at the same time democratic participation itself creates powerful opportunities for self-transformation** (Schugurensky, 2002).
- i) **Emancipatory learning should be considered as a 'two-way pedagogy'** (Santos, 2005: 362): not only between those who are striving for something but also among those who are in the position of controlling status quo (hegemonic position). 'Two-way pedagogy' is a significant factor in learning for social change because there is exceptional learning potential among the civil servants of a city and governmental administration, or rather in attempts to transition from their cemented technobureaucratic culture (Santos, 2005). Within transformative democratic practices, pedagogical aspects can be seen in the process of teaching about democracy with the method of learning-by-doing, community learning within social institutions (self-organised or also pre-existing institutions; each social institution is also educational), and in the process of democratisation of institutions, which is always a political-pedagogical process (Schugurensky, 2002: 14; Addams, 1930).

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