



## The Project

The project, funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) – GRUNDTVIG, has the general aim of exploring and exchanging experiences and practice in order to empower vulnerable individuals (for example, socially excluded people, financially excluded people, poor communities, unemployed people, drug users, etc.) through non-formal education methodologies, in order to:

- strengthen the capacity of organizations to empower vulnerable groups;
- improve the empowerment potential of non-formal education methodologies;

- promote the participation of vulnerable populations in the development of social intervention.

The learners of this partnership will be essentially staff/trainers from the partner organizations and also individuals belonging to the targeted vulnerable populations which will participate in the exchange visits.

The expected output of the project activities will be a set of recommendations and a short video addressing non-formal education and empowerment, from both the points of view of trainers and trainees.

## Objectives

- To draw a comparative assessment of different practices/methodologies used to empower vulnerable individuals/groups/communities, in each stage of social intervention
  - To discuss the impacts these practices/methodologies have on designated target groups (empowerment and autonomy)
  - To debate the reasons for different forms of involvement and participation in terms of the organizations philosophy/principles, cultural background, political “framework”, etc.
  - To explore the potential for adaptation and transferability of these practices/methodologies to other contexts (different territories/different areas of intervention).
- In the pursue of the objectives, the project intend to address subjects/questions related with the real participation and involvement of learners/trainees at different stages of social intervention strategies (e.g., needs assessment, project conception, implementation, etc).

## Activities

1. Exchange visits (to discuss the methodologies used by each partners and other organizations in their area);
  2. Moments of “in-country diagnosis” (involvement of vulnerable groups, major constraints for promoting empowerment through non-formal education, real impacts of learners involvement);
  3. Work meetings (to present, compare and analyze the in-country diagnosis, systematizing information, data and conclusions);
  4. Final seminar (to present the main conclusions of the project and present the final outputs and products).
- The activities so far includes:**
- the first “kick-off” meeting, held in Oporto in November 2012 (initiating the project activities with exchange of ideas and experience among the partners;
  - the second meeting, held in Warsaw in May 2013 (assess differences and similarities in the empowerment approaches, start the discussion about the identification of best practice, set the agenda for production and dissemination strategies of the project outputs and products).

## Partners



### APDES

#### Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento

APDES (Piaget Agency for Development) is a non-profit association, founded in 2004 in Oporto (Portugal) to promote integrated development. APDES works with people and communities in vulnerable situations with the aim of improving access to health, to employment and education, empowering people and reinforcing social cohesion.

APDES is particularly suited to work with unemployed people, prisoners, drug users and sex workers, among others, developing activities concerning employment, social integration and civic participation.

Inspired by the human rights foundational ideals, APDES promotes health through harm reduction strategies and the improvement of healthy lifestyles in different social contexts, such as schools, local communities and prisons.

[www.apdes.pt](http://www.apdes.pt)



### Associazione San Benedetto Onlus

The Association S. Benedetto Onlus, based in Livorno (Italy), has been active in the field of drug addiction since 1985, and it is officially recognized as a training agency for the region of Tuscany.

Since 1988 it has managed a daily rehab center in the city of Livorno, in collaboration with the local Health Sanitary Unit, with therapeutic, and support activities, aimed to people with addiction problems.

The Centre, framed in the typology of the therapeutic/rehabilitative services, pursues the psychic and physical recovery of people that live with pathological addictions, either coming from drugs or behavioral aspects (Gambling).

All the activities are provided by on a voluntary basis by professional social workers.

Since 1988, the activities of the Association have been enriched by the addition of projects and services that provide job training for the "social reinsertion" of disadvantaged individuals.

[www.associazionesanbenedetto.org](http://www.associazionesanbenedetto.org)

# FRS

FUNDACJA  
REDUKCJI  
SZKÓD

### Fundacja Redukcji Szkód

Fundacja Redukcji Szkód, based in Warsaw (Poland), works with long term drug-users, people being in a disadvantaged areas, at high risk of so-

cial exclusion, very often homeless, also migrants, with a little chance to gain help and assistance.

The stigma and social exclusion associated with drug use cause harm on many levels psychological, social, health and legal.

The foundation provides services to reduce risk related to drug use and to reduce social harms among individuals, families and communities.

At the present moment Fundacja Redukcji Szkód has 3 different projects running in

Warsaw, all based on the implementation of social support activities and harm reduction strategies. The leaders and staff involved in Fundacja Redukcji Szkód have extensive work experience in the field of Human Rights, namely in the fields of advocacy and activism for the rights of drug users and homeless people.

[www.redukczaszkod.pl](http://www.redukczaszkod.pl)



### North Liverpool Citizens Advice Bureau

North Liverpool Citizens Advice Bureau, based in the city of Liverpool (UK), provides free, confidential, independent and impartial advice and information on a wide

range of issues (eg: welfare benefits, housing, consumer rights, financial issues, etc) to the communities of north Liverpool from a range of local offices and outreach locations. NLCAB also deliver free financial skills training to members of local resident, community, and other groups, which reach over 3000 people per year.

Our information, advice and training services are delivered in some of the poorest and most economically depressed wards of any city in England; while our clients experience high levels of debt, and a lack of understanding about financial products and issues.

[www.northliverpoolcab.org.uk](http://www.northliverpoolcab.org.uk)

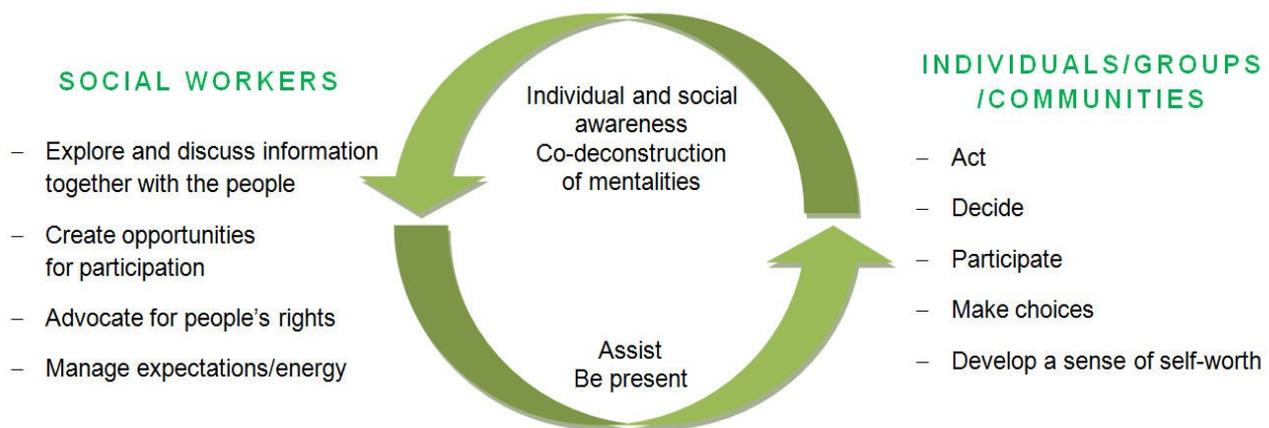
## Empowerment: debating the concept

Starting the discussion in this first phase of the project the project network shared some common issues about the concept of empowerment, that will constitute the basis for the future developments:

- we consider empowerment as an action or process where individuals/groups/communities exercise their power of choice, assuming a leading role in decisions that concern them and taking ownership of their own life circumstances; consider it a process means mainly that it takes time, it implies small gradual changes and it is a step by step transformation;
- social workers do not empower vulnerable individuals/groups/communities (empowerment can be fostered at different levels and it can be related to geographical communities or communities of interest), people empower themselves; in this sense, social workers do not “give” or “pass” power but rather “stimulate, facilitate, promote”

actions that will contribute to the individual self-empowerment;

- empowerment demands a collaborative, non-hierarchical, horizontal approach: “Never *above* you. Never *below* you. Always *with* you”; that means both autonomy AND responsibility, power of choice/leading role/ownership, and it implies will and capacity for decision making;
- to comply truly with this approach, professionals should know how to give their professional opinion and simultaneously accept and understand an eventual denial as part of the people’s choice; this calls for empathy (i.e. for identification with other people’s feelings, thoughts and attitudes);
- this is a perspective that should always be present in the intervention itself, so that professionals involve their publics in all stages: needs assessment, project planning, implementation, on-going and final evaluation and dissemination.



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