



BYMBE

Bringing Young Mothers back to education

BYMBE ORIENTATION PACK 104 ANNEX

Erasmus+: KA2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange
of Good Practices – Strategic Partnerships for adult education
[Agreement N° 2017-1-AT01-KA204-035007]



Co-funded by the
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1. INTRODUCTION

BYMBE partnership has come together to support professional inclusion of NEETS (not in employment, education or training), more specifically Young Mothers at risk of dropping out of the education system, by raising their motivation to re-enter and finalise education or VET training and by providing them support services (including professional orientation, motivation and soft skills training) to continue and finish the education or training.

Even if after the campaign (IO2 - available at: <https://bymbe.eu/campaign/>) Young Mothers are aware of the need to finalise their professional education, they will need special support to carry it out - in how to organise their next steps and professional orientation for making the right decision regarding their professional life. Reliable support networks have to be organised to assure that they can carry out the education till the end. This does not only mean the organisation of child care, but also knowledge in building up support networks of their own in case of back draws, times of frustration or stress. Skills which they often do not possess, as these are not taught in school or in their social environment.

IO4 - IO5 - IO6 is a holistic package tailored to these special needs of Young Mothers in order to involve them, empower them and keep them motivated in order to avoid drop-outs. Due to the different strengths of the partners there are different lead partners for the tasks and the packages are one after another building up on each other.

The BYMBE Orientation Pack (IO4 – available at: <https://bymbe.eu/results/>) is the first of the packs of support instruments for Young Mothers. Their main objectives are:

- Improvement in social cognitive skills;
- Improvement in emotion, recognition, and understanding;
- Better self-control;
- Better planning for solving cognitive tasks;
- More thinking before acting;
- More effective conflict resolution;
- More positive classroom atmosphere.

To reach these aims the project applies innovative tools in a combination of workshops, individual coaching sessions, peer-support sessions, decision making and planning how to implement the decisions by using the project method, idea generation session on overcoming obstacles.

For professional orientation we will use easy understandable tools like Symbol work for counselling which we learned from other project is an approach to get more in deep with the Young Mothers who are not used to

counselling settings. Symbol work methodology allows to express and make visible hidden agendas which than may be solved and to find personal motivational strategies.

Impact: Provide a holistic orientation and decision support tailored to the needs of Young Mothers; at the end the participants shall be able to take a educational/professional decision suitable to their current situation to improve their later chances of employment and being able to achieve their own income.

2. Objectives of the BYMBE Orientation Pack

The BYMBE Orientation Pack (IO4 – available at: <https://bymbe.eu/results/>) is an innovative approach to help young NEET mothers to find their own way to education and profession. It is based on a holistic approach combining group workshops, individual coaching sessions and peer sessions with the following contents:

- professional orientation and counselling;
- guidance in a decision for a certain education;
- planning of an individual professional education path;
- organisation of child care if needed.

The pack shall deliver a training proposing methodologies to build up a group atmosphere in order to install a support group on the one hand and to conduct orientation and counselling suitable for the target group, their guidance in a decision for a certain education and the planning of an individual professional education path on the other hand. The method is to enhance their self-awareness and competences, in order to strengthen their self-consciousness. In short, this is to provide orientation for career advances and education choices.

Therefore, we decided to work with the methodology for SymfoS as this method fulfils all these requirements and at the same time fosters activation and assumption of agency over their own actions.

The handbook therefore will contain the explanation on the symbol work methodology how to implement it in training, organisation of child care and other support needed and how to overcome stereotypes of motherhood and childcare, which might be a barrier to education and training.

3. Feedback on Using the Methods – Contributions

All partners have piloted the methods and made their experience. This chapter shows the experiences the trainers, social workers, etc. made with the Young Mothers using these methods and also provides suggestions if needed.

3.1. Experiences

3.1.1. EXPERIENCES FROM AUSTRIA

In Austria the BYMBE Orientation Pack (IO4 – available at: <https://bymbe.eu/results/>) has been piloted in a group but mainly individually. The trainers were impressed about the work with SymfoS. At the beginning of the training the Young Mothers were reserved and unsure about what to tell and what to keep by themselves. Especially in a group they observed each other and it took some time for them to open and to give something of themselves during the process. The playful approach was a good starting point for this topic, but the trainer had to take her/his time to discuss rules to ensure that the Young Mothers treat each other respectfully.

In face to face settings it was easier to work with SymfoS. The Young Mothers worked intensively on their past and future. They had good ideas and participated in the process which demanded a lot from them.

In both cases, group and face to face, the results were astonishing. The Young Mothers mentioned that they found their own solutions and were happy to see what they were able to create. For the trainers the results of SymfoS provide a good basis for further work.

3.1.2. EXPERIENCES FROM BULGARIA

The Young Mothers that took part in the piloting liked very much the “Competences Roadmap” and the “Basic Clearing” scenarios. The reason for this was because these scenarios and the symbol work provoked them to think about their situation and the group work lead to mutual support. The girls liked to talk about themselves, about their strong points and the difficulties they have.

The symbols helped the girls to express their emotions, which otherwise they have difficulty putting into words.

At the beginning of the training the work with symbols was unfamiliar for the girls, but they understood the goal and helped each other towards achieving the goal. The girls shared that they feel understood and accepted and this builds their motivation and confidence.

3.1.3. EXPERIENCES FROM IRELAND

Exchange House Tribli carried out SymfoS training with seven Young Mothers in. The training yielded excellent results. The “Basic Clearing” tool enabled the Young Mothers to identify goals, the choice of material was broad giving them choice. The Young Mothers loved the exercises and really engaged; moreover, they really understood the basic principles and purposes of it. The exercise made sense to them and they told facilitators that it really got

them thinking about their lives, where they are and where they want to go in terms of education. The SymfoS peer buddy system was very effective with our client group as relationships are very important to them and in returning to education and training they would clearly need this support going forward. They talked about how they their children needed to see them achieve and how it might increase the overall life experience and improve their living conditions. The girls took control easily and supported each other in the exercise. They were very supportive of each other. Furthermore, they appeared to have fun which is crucial to learning.

3.1.4. EXPERIENCES FROM ITALY

As explained in the BYMBE Orientation Pack (IO4 – available at: <https://bymbe.eu/results/>), IO4 piloting activities are focused on the provision of orientation, empowerment and self-confidence building through the SymfoS methodology, which is particularly suitable to identify Young Mothers hidden resources and potentials, to get clearness about their goals and to plan concrete next steps in education to do.

CESIE had previously implemented the SymfoS methodology with:

- Disadvantaged young people (NEETs, migrants, unemployed), to provide an effective support in motivation and goal setting for facing problems in school and labour market;
- Young people assisted by USSM office (Local social services for minors);
- EVS volunteers and participants of local and international trainings to support them in building their educational/professional project;
- Professionals (CESIE staff, youth trainers, social workers, guidance counsellors) involved in specific training about SymfoS.

Benefits of SymfoS methodology for the Young Mothers:

- Especially suitable to work with vulnerable clients with additional barriers (lack of basic skills; emotional blockage).
- Holistic, less verbal method, based on a positive pedagogical approach (attention to solutions instead of problems, self-responsibility).
- It facilitates and accompany the individual learning of Young Mothers, fostering assumption of responsibility for their own learning and providing motivational support by a group of Young Mothers facing similar situations (peers).
- It makes past and future activities visible helps to deal directly with goals
- Young Mothers gain direct access to their own feelings regarding motherhood and education.

Facilitators engaged in CESIE's IO4 piloting activities have attended a specific training on SymfoS approach and on the "Basic Clearing" and the "Planning Pathway" methodologies, as they were included in IO4 piloting training units nr.13 – "Competences Roadmap" or "Basic Clearing" and nr.18 – "Planning Roadmap".

To efficiently implement activities with Young Mothers, facilitators who have not received specific training can refer to the SymfoS: *Train the Trainer (TtT) Curriculum* (<https://cesie.org/en/youth-9/SymfoS-train-the-trainer-ttt-curriculum/>) and the *SymfoS: "Basic Clearing" Handbook* (<https://cesie.org/en/youth-7/SymfoS-basic-clearing/>). Other materials can be found at: <https://cesie.org/en/project/SymfoS-symbols-for-success/>

CESIE had already purchased the SymfoS toolkit to implement the methodologies. Facilitators not having the SymfoS kit available can build their own, but it requires preparation largely in advance in order to build the materials and collect the symbols necessary to implement the activities.

3.1.5. EXPERIENCES FROM LITHUANIA

The BYMBE Orientation Pack (IO4 – available at: <https://bymbbe.eu/results/>), developed during the BYMBE project, was piloted in Lithuania working with Young Mothers in the group and individually.

The SymfoS method, suggested in this methodology, gives the possibility for the Young Mothers to express themselves by using symbols, reflecting on the current situation and circumstance. The method proposed is an excellent tool as it lets the counsellor to understand the importance and the role of other persons in the young mother's life. The practical tasks using symbols facilitates the conversation and gives the possibility to reveal the strengths of the person as well as to concentrate on the support needed in the situation. The work with symbols allows to the young mother express her feelings and get the feedback and support. The SymfoS method is easy to use and liked by participants also facilitates the engagement.

Planning the achievements related to education done by using SymfoS method allows the person to visualise the actions needed and concentrate on the objectives.

3.1.6. EXPERIENCES FROM SPAIN

Two trainings were held during the days 07/05/2018 and 08/05/2018. During these two trainings with Young Mothers, several councils from the northern region of Spain Asturias were covered. Magenta decided to do it this way and move the trainer to each of the localities due to the lack of resources and lack of free time of the participating Young Mothers. At first it was difficult to attract these Young Mothers to participate in the training. But once they started they were very receptive.

- SymfoS
- The Flying Egg
- The carpet exercise

We added:

- Emotional Intelligence;
- Multiple Intelligence from Howard Gardner;
- Motivational Interviews;
- Individual Learning Plans;
- In addition, during the training, gender equality and the empowerment of mothers were worked on.

3.2. Challenges

All countries faced similar challenges. Especially the time management during the workshops showed the issues.

3.2.1. THE AUSTRIAN PARTNER

The main difficulty is to find the Young Mothers and to stay in contact with them during a longer period of time. Especially to keep up the concentration during the workshops was difficult. Frauen im Brennpunkt provided childcare. But still they were not concentrated.

3.2.2. THE BULGARIAN PARTNER

It is difficult to reach the target group. A lot of time is needed for this. Since the mothers have to take care of kids it is difficult for them to spare 3 full days.

3.2.3. THE IRISH PARTNER

Exchange House Tribli organised the time to suit the Mothers and they went on site as it was more convenient. Two Mothers had to bring their children as they had no child care on the day. This did not impact the training in any way.

As the mothers had difficulty with child care Exchange House Tribli had to give them the option to bring the children on all the training days. As stated above this worked as all the mothers supported each other. As mentioned above the main bulk of childcare will come from their own peer group

As with the first day child care was the biggest barrier to participation as in day one the only way to overcome this was to allow any mother who had to bring their children with them.

3.2.4. THE ITALIAN PARTNER

Too long activities and activities demanding attendance for more than 1 day a week could result in high rate of dropping out.

Young Mothers are not available in the afternoon: schools in Sicily generally close around 1 or 1.30 pm, and family with low incomes cannot afford childcare.

3.2.5. THE LITHUANIAN PARTNER

Like for the Bulgarian partner it is difficult to reach the target group. A lot of time is needed for this. The Young Mothers in Lithuania had problems finding child care.

3.2.6. THE SPANISH PARTNER

Magenta Consultoría organised the time to suit the mothers and they went on site as it was more convenient. The activities were divided into the two days that the train lasted to make it less tiring for the participants.

On the first day they got the Young Mothers to talk about personal experiences. Then they helped the mothers set some goals for their future. After using the SymfoS method they developed a learning plan for the future of each young mother.

The recommendations the partners want to make to ensure that the time management is adjusted to the situation:

- Plan enough time for preparatory work.
- Divide the training in short sessions in more days.
- Try to create homogenous groups with similar needs (family duties, need to embark episodic jobs).
- When possible, implement activities in the aggregation centres or in the women centres usually visited by Young Mothers: this will create synergies with other services and will make Young Mothers feel more confident.

The Italian partner made some adaptations to deal with the challenges. The original structure of IO4 training activities has been changed: CESIE's IO4 piloting activities have included 5 meetings of 4 hours each (5x4h = 20h per IO4 piloting). This change of timetable was deemed as necessary in order to allow Young Mothers to include participation to the training in their daily activities.

In Austria many breaks were necessary. The trainers used this breaks to talk about the done work and what they had already achieved. The breaks were not useless but rather an enrichment for Young Mothers to take up contact privately and for the trainer to talk to the Young Mothers individually to guide the process.

3.3. Methods

The partners worked intensively on the methods. The table lists the challenges, suggestions and possible adaptations:

	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS	ADAPTIONS
BYMBE Welcome			<p>CESIE's training room decor included BYMBE posters from IO2 Campaign (https://bymbe.eu/campaign/) to help Young Mothers develop a sense of belonging to the environment.</p> <p>All partners describe a higher level of commitment when the logo and posters are used and when the training room has a warm atmosphere.</p>
Chose a Symbol		<p>To keep participants focused the facilitator has to clearly state what the purpose of the go-round is, and which are the time limits.</p> <p>It is useful to have the process written on a flipchart where everyone can see it.</p>	<p>During the activity everyone got the chance to introduce herself in turn and briefly report about their experience as mothers. Instead of 20 minutes, the activity lasted 1 hour to give everyone the opportunity to describe their situation and challenges.</p>
Sociogram on five levels	<p>If there are Young Mothers who know each other they might start talking about other topics or connecting experiences. The trainer</p>	<p>This method is useful in groups with more than 6 persons.</p>	<p>CESIE merged this training unit with the previous one and kept only the level concerning children.</p> <p>In small groups the Young Mothers</p>

	has to keep an eye on that and intervene if needed.		can sit on the floor and have the map in the middle. Then they can answer the questions.
Shower of positive Impressions	If the Young Mothers already know each other the trainer has to think about questions and impressions the Young Mothers have to answer and tell during the exercise that have as much positive output for every young mother as possible.	When most participants are already familiar with each other, the trainer must pay attention to those who are not part of their group and display efforts to not have them been put on the spot.	CESIE started activities with a group of Young Mothers who are regular visitors to a women centre. They already knew each other, so they were asked to describe all the other participants by writing simple adjectives or sentences on post-it which were then attached to posters bearing their names.
The Flying Egg	The challenge is to convey the background of the exercise because Young Mothers sometimes have problems engaging themselves and if they have to work on tasks they cannot classify, they withdraw. In Italy, this training unit has not been included in CESIE's IO4 piloting activities because throwing objects from the windows of our building is unsafe.		To adapt the method and not throw things out of windows the Young Mothers can stand on tables as well.
The carpet exercise		The group needs to have at least 6 members to make this exercise interesting and fascinating. The trainer should discuss her/his observations and the impressions of the Young Mothers to ensure that they learnt something about themselves and their behaviour to enable them to reflect.	
To be a Mother	It Italy, most highlighted problems often refer to the lack of employment, social assistance or free childcare which cannot be addressed by the project. It is difficult for Young Mothers in Austria to make a difference between their own expectations and the	The trainer has to reflect the conditions. Sometimes the Young Mothers are not well educated and have a small range of vocabulary and therefore difficulties explaining. The trainer supports the Young Mothers by providing cards with suggestions	Being 6 participants, in Italy this activity was implemented as a debate where everyone took a turn to speak on motherhood, expectations by Italian society and what they think is important for a child and why. The Spanish, Irish and Bulgarian participants have equal expectations in being a mother – their family life

	expectations of society.	(adjectives, statements, etc.)	and their nearest environment had to be integrated into the discussion. In Austria the discussion had to focus on the mothers and their needs.
Challenges & Chances as a Young Mother	<p>It Italy, most highlighted problems often refer to the lack of employment, social assistance or free childcare which cannot be addressed by the project.</p> <p>In Austria the focus of the Young Mothers is more on being a good mother than on the lack of employment, social assistance or free childcare, because especially having small children it is usual not to work and there is hardly any pressure from their environment to start working or start en vocational training.</p> <p>In Ireland, Spain and Bulgaria the challenge of the Young Mothers is to meet the expectations of the family.</p> <p>To see chances and focus on the chances is difficult in every country.</p>	<p>The trainer has to reflect the conditions. Sometimes the Young Mothers are not well educated and have a mall range of vocabulary and therefore difficulties explaining.</p> <p>The trainer supports the Young Mothers by providing cards with suggestions (adjectives, statements, etc.)</p>	<p>Being 6 participants, in Italy this activity was implemented as a debate where everyone took a turn to speak on challenges of being a young mother, possible challenges during BYMBE project and what could help to overcome these challenges.</p> <p>The Spanish, Irish and Bulgarian participants have equal expectations in being a mother – their family life and their nearest environment had to be integrated into the discussion.</p> <p>In Austria the discussion had to focus on the mothers and their needs.</p> <p>The Spanish, Austrian and Lithuanian partner talked about the topic in face to face meetings before the workshop. A small motivating interview was conducted with each of the Young Mothers, in Bulgaria and Spain for a few minutes integrated in the workshop, to help set some aspects and objectives before carrying out the individual challenges.</p>
Competences Roadmap or “Basic Clearing”	<p>In some moments the Young Mothers need the help of the trainer but finally they managed to fish the exercise.</p> <p><u>Challenges regarding the process flow in Italy:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original training scheme for IO4 had this training unit being implemented 6 times in a day (45minutes x 6 = 4h30). This was not possible according to CESIE’s training scheme (5 meetings of 4 hour each). • It requires time to carry 	<p>After explaining some important aspects, MAGENTA proceeded to perform the multiple intelligence test validated in Spanish. After that, facilitator explained the meaning of the different types of intelligence, the meaning of their own results and how they felt about them. Young Mothers especially liked this area of the training, and they were very motivated to observe that they all excelled in some of the intelligences.</p> <p><u>Recommendations regarding the process flow:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is useful to have the 	<p>The Spanish partner added the Theory of Multiple Intelligence into this exercise.</p> <p>In Italy, CESIE adopted the SymfoS Method ““Basic Clearing”” for this training unit. Activity included also the <i>Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Activity</i> described in Set of Intervention Methods to involve Young NEET Mothers (IO3 - available at: https://bymbe.eu/campaign/).</p>

	<p>out the activity, so it is hard to include the interventions in the predefined IO4 training scheme's timeslots.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of scenarios presented by Young Mothers were focused on family wellbeing, and not on education or employment. <p>As the Italian partner mentioned, all partners had to think about the timetable using this measure before starting to ensure that the Young Mothers have time enough to work.</p> <p>It always depends on the number of participants. How to integrate the exercise into the training.</p>	<p>process written on a flipchart where everyone can see it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups often tend to focus on negative aspects, challenges and complains towards supporting systems. Adding one or two other facilitators is useful in order to make reflection process focused on possibilities and actions. • Keep other participants at distance from client and symbols (e.g. trainer and client on the floor with SymfoS tools; other participants sit on chairs around them): if participants can easily touch symbols, they are distracted. 	
<p>Planning Roadmap</p>	<p>It requires time to carry out the activity, so it is hard to include the interventions in the predefined IO4 training scheme's timeslot.</p>	<p>The Young Mothers liked the activity a lot since they finally got a clear objective and action to start working on their future. The trainer has to support the activity to open the Young Mothers minds towards unspoken ideas.</p> <p><u>Recommendations regarding the process flow:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep other participants at distance from client and symbols (e.g. trainer and client on the floor with SymfoS tools; other participants sit on chairs around them): if participants can easily touch symbols, they are distracted. • Even with the group support, planning future can be challenging. In case of difficulties or emotional blockage, be supportive and allow participants to carry out the activity during Individual Counselling. 	<p>CESIE adopted the SymfoS method "<i>Planning Pathway</i>" for this training unit, which was an alternative to "<i>Basic Clearing</i>" in Training Unit n.13.</p> <p>All partners combined the "<i>Planning Roadmap</i>" and the "<i>Basic Clearing</i>".</p>

3.3.1. COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Austrian Partner

In Austria the Young Mothers are hardly tangible. The trainers have problems finding Young Mothers who are interested in their professional future. If the Young Mothers engage themselves, it needs a long period of time to convince them to think about their future. It is easier if they have already been involved in the project by being invited to face to face meetings. The counselling at the beginning of the process is very important. They have to be empowered to talk about themselves, to learn how to communicate their ideas about their future with their child without feeling insecure being a good mother. From the moment on when the Young Mothers trust in the trainer and start being confident, they are ready to be part of the workshop of IO4. In retrospect the composition of the IO's should be free. Sometimes there might be Young Mothers who need to be empowered before they can start working on their vocational education. In summary in Austria the experience with the methods especially SymfoS was good. It is a good way for the Young Mothers to find solutions and describing their life in their own words.

The Bulgarian Partner

Bimec doesn't suggest any adaptations and changes, because they find the symbol-work and the exercises very suitable.

The only suggestion that they have is to use more simple words, because the Young Mothers from their groups had difficulty understanding the more complicated words.

The Irish Partner

All the counsellors which engaged with the SymfoS exercise really believed in the benefit from it. Visuals tools like this are beneficial in working with communities and individuals with low levels of literacy as many of the Young Mothers from the Traveller community may have issues with. The fact that it was a combined exercise and based on what the Young Mothers could see provoked internal evaluation, which the Young Mothers used as a way to critically analyse their lives both past and present. Exchange House Ireland Tribli believes that this tool has really helped them to make decisions about their futures and what it is that they really want.

The Italian Partner

Some particular issues encountered during the piloting with Young Mothers included: late comers, resistant learners (refusing to work), non-participative observers, poor attendance and unpreparedness. To prevent these problems, teaching techniques implemented by CESIE included:

- the choice to start activities with a small group of 6 Young Mothers (instead of 12), to focus on engagement of inattentive learners and opportunity to provide more focused one-to-one work;
- getting the consensus of Young Mothers regarding the time and dates of meetings;
- balancing the activities, energisers and short discussions of the IO4 piloting among the 5 meetings to engage distractible learners;

- fostering engagement through asking for personal opinion and encouraging questioning, to further motivate Young Mothers who are reluctant to participate through different engaging techniques.

The Lithuanian Partner

The BYMBE Orientation Pack (IO4 – available at: <https://bymbe.eu/results/>), developed during the BYMBE project, was piloted in Lithuania working with Young Mothers in group and individually.

The SymfoS Method, suggested in this methodology, gives the possibility to “talk” by using symbols and to reflect on the current situation and circumstances of the young mother. As well it lets us to understand the importance and the role of other persons in the young mother’s life. The practical tasks using symbols facilitates the conversation and gives the possibility to reveal the strengths of the person as well as to concentrate on the support needed in the situation. The work with symbols allows expressing feelings and getting the feedback. the SymfoS method is easy to use and liked by participants.

The planning the achievements related to education done by using SymfoS method allows the person to visualise the actions needed and concentrate on the objectives.

The Spanish Partner

After the sessions with the participants and after having carried out numerous exercises and activities, the trainer with the Young Mothers drew the conclusions of all this. On the one hand, it is important that in those exercises that are written they are helped and supported given their low level of education. For this reason, teamwork was often encouraged to solve the doubts that were presented to them. It is also important to take into account the ability to concentrate on activities and psychological burnout that may mean for them to begin to face the educational and professional situation.

Finally, mention that several of the participants finished the sessions with the clear objective of doing something to change their situation and with a series of actions to be carried out in that next week. They talked about taking their driver’s license, starting with the action of taking a test to study, so they were given options to find those tests. They also talked about taking compulsory secondary education, as the first action to be informed about the access requirements and the exam calendar. In the latter case, it is derived from the social services counsellor and the address of the nearest adult centre.

In short, the training carried out with these two groups of Young Mothers obtained very positive and encouraging results. Not only did he increase his motivation, but also his empowerment and his decision to act.



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