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WHAT HAS CHANGED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN GIRLACT IN ALBANIA AND SERBIA DUE TO THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND PEER TRAINING WITHIN GIRLACT?

The Evaluation report on the interest, usefulness and impact of the Manuals and trainings specifically developed within GIRLACT project



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1. INTRODUCTION

Part of the overall aim of the “Empowering Girls to Be Socially and Financially Strong Actors – GIRLACT” project was “to introduce and enhance an innovative model of learning” for young people in Albania and Serbia. Based on the Terms of Reference for this Evaluation, we have been engaged to evaluate “the changes and impact the learning models – developed manuals specifically for this project, training cycles as they were constructed (having young people and youth workers as participants - trainees first, then as trainers themselves in their own environments) have had, have inspired or provoked in the young people, especially girls and their activities and lives”.

It is important to state that this is not to be taken as the evaluation of the project itself. We have not been commissioned to address the overall project and its implementation. This is the evaluation of the appropriateness and impact of the training tools developed, the content of the tools, training models and their structure to bring about any change for young people, especially girls in Albania and Serbia.

Within the GIRLACT project, the first output delivered was an Analysis of the gaps in knowledge and skills in social and financial education of young people in Albania and Serbia. This was the basis for the development of the pilot training material. The Dutch partner Aflatoun International developed the Aflateen+ Programme for Girls for Serbia and Albania encompassing the missing topics and themes as described in the Analysis document. It contained a total of 24 units across 5 sections: 1. Myself, My World; 2. My Rights, My Ideas; 3. My Body, My Choices; 4. My Money, My Plans and 5. My Enterprise. Simultaneously, EPTO developed the Peer Training Curriculum – a methodology for transferring the knowledge and skills horizontally from one peer to another so that the learning process on sensitive and sometimes difficult topics can be made more acceptable to young people. This methodology can also be useful in horizontal learning process within in-service professional development of teachers (especially Master teachers of the classes and active citizenship teachers. The methodology was developed to be useful for NGOs working with youth groups and school teachers in non-formal education. It contained five units designed to include most frequent recommendations from the Analysis of the Gaps in knowledge and Skills. The units were structured as: 1. Introduction and building the foundation; 2.



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Culture and Identity; 3. Examining prejudice and discrimination; 4. Confronting Prejudice and Discrimination and 5. Facilitation Skills.

Combined these two deliverables were used aiming to help young people, especially girls in Albania and Serbia to: a) gain basic knowledge about themes and topics within social and financial education found missing in the education in Albania and Serbia, b) help them change their own attitudes, opinions and behaviour, c) inspire them to help their peers gain needed knowledge and skills in social and financial area to change their attitudes, opinions and behaviour.

The process of sharing the information contained in these two products was designed in such a way to have Aflatoun International and EPTO present their Toolkits to groups of at least 35 youth workers and young people in both Albania and Serbia, then from the interested participants to create at least five trainers' teams in each country (10 initial participants) who would, with the support of Albanian and Serbian project partner trainers, hold a total of at least 10 trainings on social and financial education themes and topics and on peer education for youth workers and young people in their own environment.

The External Evaluation of the changes and impact of these two Toolkits and the learning model on young people, especially girls in Albania and Serbia was conducted at various stages: in June, July and August 2019, when the first information sessions were held in Albania and Serbia, then in the period February – December 2020 when the local training sessions were held in both countries, and finally in September 2021 within the preparation for the Final Conference held in November 2021. It has been conducted by Tamara Tomasevic PR Consultancy services EXPOSE.

1.1 Reasons for the External Evaluation

At the stage of setting up a partnership, it was made clear that in addition to the benefits of the project to the young people, youth workers and partners themselves in Albania and Serbia, the project should help the partners from the Programme countries (Belgium and the Netherlands) finalise their own wider range training programmes and toolkits by including the experience of piloting the initial ones in Albania and Serbia. Therefore, it was decided to have an external evaluation that goes beyond event/activity evaluation. At the time of information sharing (six-day training on each of two main toolkits), it was possible to gather only the first impressions of the participants. More reflection was expected to happen



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among the initial participants who decided to become local trainers during the preparation and conducting of the local training sessions in Albania and Serbia. It was also expected that local trainings would provoke and inspire, as well as encourage young people to reflect on their own attitudes and opinions, give them necessary tools for starting any social activity, but also make them realise the necessary steps and preconditions for any sound financial planning process.

All this could be captured and could provide the necessary feedback to Aflatoun International and EPTO only through planned and executed external evaluation. It is our hope that the findings and recommendations can help these two organisations in finalising their toolkits for wider arena of young people and youth workers across Europe.

1.2 Goals of External Evaluation

Goals of the External Evaluation are:

1. To determine the changes the content of the developed manuals specifically for this project, have had, have inspired or provoked in the young people's, especially girls' opinions, attitudes and confidence and in their activities and lives in Albania and Serbia
2. To determine the changes that the learning models - training cycles as they were constructed (having young people and youth workers as participants - trainees first, then as trainers themselves in their own environments) have had or inspired in the self-confidence, willingness to take action or include in the formal education teaching in young people and youth workers / teachers in Albania and Serbia
3. To evaluate the impact of the content and learning models on young people and youth workers in Albania and Serbia
4. To provide inputs for suggested improvements, adaptations or changes in the process of finalisation of the training curricula to Aflatoun International and EPTO

1.3 Methodology applied

This External Evaluation has been conducted in line with the Project description, its Overall and specific objectives and expected impact.



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We used qualitative data with the aim of collecting data, attitudes towards and opinions about: a) the content of the curricula in terms of relevance, usefulness and influence on changing the pre-existing ones and b) learning models in terms of their clarity, applicability and usefulness.

In the process of collecting data, we used:

- a) Individual interviews with the participants of the information sharing activities and local training sessions (in total in Albania and Serbia, we conducted 80 interviews)
- b) Individual interviews with the facilitators of the local training sessions (in total, in Albania and Serbia, we conducted 12 interviews)
- c) Questionnaires before the first information sharing activity and then again in preparation of the Final conference (the first time, we collected 108 answered questionnaires, the second time 79)
- d) Notes from each day of local training that the facilitators collected at the checkout sessions on the impressions, what was considered most and least useful topic or method used during the day
- e) Focus groups with youth workers and teachers (we held 2 focus groups per country)

Within the process, we have also taken into account evaluations of each information sharing activity and each local training made by all the participants, expected results of the project in the area of introduction and enhancing of the learning models in Albania and Serbia and the recommendations from the Gap in knowledge and skills analysis in Albania and Serbia.

We believe that the collected data together with the analysed documents have provided enough and adequate material to analyse and answer the objectives of the External Evaluation.



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2. ANALYSIS OF THE GATHERED DATA

On one side, the content of the developed toolkit Aflatoun+ Programme for Girls was dealing with the themes and topics directly connected to the social and financial education per recommendations from the analysis “Gaps in knowledge and skills in social and financial education of young people in Albania and Serbia” and the international standards of the expected outcomes for the graduates of the pre-university education. On the other side, the Peer Training Curriculum content included the topics related to prejudice, stereotypes, team building and facilitation skills in transferring the knowledge and skills in the horizontal way – through peer training.

We analysed all the gathered information in view of the changes in opinions, attitudes, confidence, in the activities and lives that the content of the curriculum and [resented learning models made, inspired or provoked on both youth workers (NGO trainers in nonformal education as well as teachers in formal education system) and young people who participated in the training sessions in both Albania and Serbia.

2.1 Changes the content of the developed manuals specifically for this project, have had, have inspired or provoked in the young people’s, especially girls’, opinions, attitudes and confidence and in their activities and lives in Albania and Serbia

In this section, we will present the analysis of the data gathered in relation to the content of two toolkits: a) the Aflatoun + Programme for Girls in Albania and Serbia, and b) Peer Training Curriculum.

We analysed the responses to the questions about the content – topics and themes that have been chosen in both toolkits.

2.1.1 Changes the content of the Aflatoun+ Programme for Girls in Albania and Serbia has had, has inspired or provoked in young people’s, especially girls’, opinions, attitudes and confidence in their activities and lives in Albania and Serbia

It is important to say that we analysed the data coming from both young people and the youth workers (civil society trainers and teachers/professional support teams’ representatives in the formal education system) that were participating in the activities. Analysing the pre and post information sharing training for the Aflatoun+ Programme for Girls in Albania and Serbia related surveys, 91% of the respondents stated that their Learning Objectives have been met or exceeded (6% answered “mainly met” and 3% has not answered this question). In naming the topics and themes that they found most useful, the



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topics mentioned most of the times (58% of the respondents, 48% and 45% respectively) were: developing a pyramid of productivity, bank of resources and healthy relationships. Given that all three topics relate to both social and financial aspects of life, we decided to ask for more detailed explanations of these choices in our interviews.

The most prominent feature related to the discussions about these choices was that they are never talked about at school and at the same time not discussed in their families. Nejra B. (15) from Prijepolje said that “the topic on healthy relationships and especially how to get out of unhealthy relationships showed me (and many in the group) how much violence among peers, male/female relationships and in home is normalised and I was shocked when one girl actually said that she thought that even a slap from a boyfriend can be a sign of love. I don’t remember ever having any discussion about these so important topics at school”.

“Bank of resources I thought was a very long and boring exercise in the beginning and I couldn’t see why it was insisted by the trainers to write down every single thing we can do, like simple stuff – baking a cake. Even when we listed all the things and wrote them on the board, and when the trainers said that we should add anything we didn’t write initially in our list, if someone else mentioned something that applies to us too, I thought I couldn’t wait to finish this long exercise. It, then came like a shock when they (the trainers) revealed to us that each and every item we ended up listing can be also a source of income or an idea for a business. When they made us count how many items we each had on the individual list, it felt as if someone took a big stone off my chest because I have always been thinking that I could only look for a job in the work related to my major at school and what I have diploma for. This always made me anxious about my choice of secondary school, I felt that if I made a mistake there, my whole life would be ruined. Now, I feel that I can always find something from my list that I can do and earn some money. I have never ever thought of this. I decided to keep my list and made a promise to myself that I would try to update it every now and then. This is such a confidence boost”, said Rebeka D. (17) from Surdulica.

Stasa C. (18) from Vranje stated that the pyramid of productivity was “so important, especially now when I am trying to combine all the tasks in my final year at high school, youth NGO where we are putting together new projects and implementing the ones we have got support for, preparing for university entrance exam and trying to find time for my friends and fun. The topic of developing long-



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term, mid-term and short-term priorities and how they link to one another is so important and I think it needs to be taught from the first grade on at every level of education. We all need it – I need it, my mom needs it, my younger brother needs it... These new skills I can use in planning both my time and life now and for preparing new project proposals in our NGO. It is so logical and yet, no one has ever put it in the prospective like this before”.

Topics related to the financial skills (planning, saving, spending, budgeting) were also high on the list of needed and useful topics and themes, but majority of the participants stated that they would need more training and practice in order to feel comfortable to use them individually. The participants coming from the secondary schools of economics, or teachers of the economic group of subjects found these topics easier, but most of them commented in the interviews that the training helped them connect these themes to their own lives.

“I have always only been learning these topics as units taught in school and have never thought how I can use them in my own life. It turns out that for the first time I realised that I have been ‘living’ them too – especially when it comes to using my phone credits, choosing the package for internet, phone calls, and use of social media network. At least, I will never ever say again that I don’t know anything about financial planning again”, said Mirveta S. (19) from Surdulica.

Almost all youth workers agreed that they never or very rarely were discussing any financial topics with their students and pupils, and even if they did, it was related to the needed immediate finances for school trips or concrete other payments. They felt that there was a lot of content that they could use especially at the beginning of the school year in their classes in order to prepare and plan for saving and implementation of different projects. They felt that the topics were very useful not only for their teaching, but also for their own families and themselves. It was stated many times during the interviews with both young people and youth workers in both Albania and Serbia that the financial topics and budgeting were rarely if ever discussed at homes and most of the interviewed young people said they had no idea if there was any defined family budget planning at their homes. Youth workers who have families also confirmed that if they do plan a family budget, they do not discuss it with the children. All of the interviewed people in both countries said that they would try to plan their own personal budgets and that several tips and pieces of advice they received during the training they found very helpful in their daily lives.



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“I have never discussed any family financial plans or expenses with my children at home, I thought that it was unnecessary to burden them with our financial problems. They (the children) are modest and they never asked us for anything outrageous, but at the same time, whenever they asked for more money to top up their phone credit, or to go out with their friends, I thought to myself that they obviously didn’t know how to save or plan their expenses. And sometimes I blamed them, instead of teaching them these skills... Now, I can see and hear from the young people here that they want to learn these things, that they are interested in them, so I will have to find a way to ‘do a little training’ at home first, said Jelena B. (37) from Beocin.

The only topics young people found less needed were some of the sessions about their rights since according to them, listing the groups of rights and articles of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child they were given many times at school. There were, however, also answers stating that not all the children and young people knew about these rights given that not all the children and young people were having active citizenship classes at school where human and child rights are part of the curriculum, so that these topics should be taught, but that youth workers and teachers should first find out if the young people know already a lot about the rights or this section was needed during the training.

“I’m sick and tired of all these lists of the children’s and human rights. We can’t do anything about them, so what is the point of repeating this stuff at school almost every year? The politicians should learn them and implement them, not we”, said Endri G. (15) from Kukes, but his peer Ornela B. (16) from Berat disagreed: “If we all know our rights, we can ask the municipality, school or parents to make them work. My friend’s mother lost her job only because she was pointing out to the rights of the families to social assistance, but then three years later she was returned to work only because she knew her rights. This is why it is important to learn about the rights always, even we are young”.

Gender equality, as a group of rights, was, however, thought to be very important for all and needed to be repeatedly tackled and even “unpacked” in more detailed way even in the Toolkit to cover various environments where gender equality needed improvements (at home, at school, in relationships, in choosing higher education carriers, employment and even in the instances when support for start-up enterprises was sought).



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Youth workers from different NGOs working with young people also shared the opinion that the sessions related to the child rights were the most frequently used topics in the majority of the training and work with young people and therefore, they would probably value more rights related topics relevant to the specific themes – community or family forced early marriages vs. rights, rights to education for both male and female young people, rights to participation and association, free speech – those which in both Albanian and Serbian societies are rather selectively encouraged.

As an example, they shared the questions which they were asked by the young people after the training sessions in Albania: “At what age I have the right to organise a youth NGO in Albania?”, asked Endri G. (15) from Kukes. As the youth workers from Kukes pointed out, the questions and interests of young people were also a result of the content of the discoveries during the youth exchange visits and reflected what type of rights the young people are discussing among themselves because Endri’s question was coming also from the experience he had had in the whole project. They quoted him as saying: “I had been told before in another project that we had with young people in south Serbia, that in Serbia, young people can start their formal youth organisation at the age of 13. I don’t even know if we can register a youth organisation below the age of 18 in Albania. This type of rights I want to learn about”.

Youth workers from formal education (mainly teachers, but also some professional support teams’ members like educational psychologists or pedagogues) expressed their satisfaction with all the saving, planning, budgeting, project design and presentation topics in the curriculum, but thought that the topics related to the emotions and potentially sensitive relationship matters need to be tackled carefully with extra trained people because they can lead to many individual concerns. “If you ‘open’ some wounds and unbalance someone, you need to have the skills to help the person get back to the psychological balance. Otherwise, you can make more damage. We talked about family relations, intimate relations and for young people who do not have much space for escape, especially from the family, just opening up these topics without giving any ways for getting out of such situations make things worse for them”, said Ksenija J., a school psychologist from Kucevo.

Youth workers from a local youth organisation Our World, Our Rules also agreed that they changed their way of preparing project proposals and that in the meantime they won two grants for their initiatives. “We use the problem tree, SMART and SWOT analysis before writing any proposal now and it makes



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things so much easier to formulate short answers to the questions in the forms when we have the analysis done beforehand”, said Djordje S, (18) from this organisation.

In the focus groups in Kukes, the teachers said that they found it so much easier to organise any fundraising with their students when they explained the planning process and that their attitude changed after the trainings. I have been using the problem tree and SMART technique a lot in the classroom for different things – from solving the classroom problems to planning any outside activity”, said Jonida M, from the High School in Kukes.

Young people in their focus groups were pointing out as a major contributor to the impact of the content of the training first the changes in their perceptions of the healthy relationships and how much it helped them to change their behaviour. The second contributor to the changes was their awareness of the different positions and life road paths depending on their education levels, gender, age, position in the family or the difference whether one is a single parent household or a couple raising children.

One of the participants in the focus group in Serbia said: “I used to think that parents were just repeating the same sentence to each and every one of us as part of the rhetoric when discussing who we date and how important it is not to have children before we are ‘mature’ for them. When we were learning about the positions on a life path and how far you can go if you are a teenage mother, or single parent, or a single business woman, it became awkward to see that all the adults who were having a role card with any of these situations were showing the same – that it wasn’t something our parents were saying”, two university students, sisters from Berat were stating. “Now, we actually ask ourselves what could happen if we fail at university and end up as single mothers...”

2.1.2 Changes the content of the Peer Training Curriculum has had, has inspired or provoked in young people’s, especially girls’, opinions, attitudes and confidence in their activities and lives in Albania and Serbia

The analysis of the pre and post training evaluations made by the participants of the 6-day information sharing training held on peer training, showed that in terms of the content, the training exceeded all their expectations in more than 60% (62% said that it exceeded their expectations, 36% stated that it satisfied all their expectations). It appears that 98% of the participants in both Albania and Serbia found the content of the toolkit and training as very much needed and useful material.



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In huge majority, both young people and youth workers pointed out that the activities themselves were really fun, but the content and rationale behind them was very serious.

“This was a mentally and emotionally challenging six days of training. Activities themselves made us laugh a lot, but the topics are rather sensitive, and very important if and when you want to work with people – whatever age they are. The activities themselves are fun and easy, but the introduction of the topic, the way to lead and especially the reflection part are crucial segments in all this. I love that each of these steps are explained, that tips are given on how to... and even frequent mistakes in facilitating any peer training are pointed out with the advice how to avoid them or get out of them”, said Marija K, (28) from Belgrade, a youth worker who also pointed out that even though she had been a trainer for more than eight years herself, she discovered many things that would help her in future work.

Managing group dynamics, preventing and managing conflicts in a group where different people have different views on the sensitive subjects were also stressed as very needed skills and some younger teachers commented that these are the skills, they had never had any support to develop, neither through the initial education, nor through the in-service professional development trainings, so they felt that the explanation of these topics was extremely useful.

“I would love that all my young teachers could learn how to build a team spirit in the classroom, how to do it so that they could prevent peer violence in the class, prevent conflicts among young people and manage the conflicting opinions in the classroom as Master class teachers, said Zoran P, Headmaster of a school in Sudulica.

When discussing if and what changes the training sessions have brought about, the responses at the focus groups organised a year after the initial training sessions, at the time before the project ended and during the preparation for the final conference in September 2021, were very descriptive:

“I thought that it would be very difficult to create a normal atmosphere in the class after almost a year of online learning and since it was during the first year in the secondary school, this generation of children hardly knew who they were in the same class with when this school year started. So, I took some of those activities from the ‘Building the foundation’ unit in the Peer Training Curriculum and started this school year first with trying to build up some team spirit and respect for one another in the class. It really seems to work – it seems that they are bonding much better than previous generations



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when I always had small groups of children coming from the same elementary school sticking together and separate from other groups of children from different elementary schools. I plan on working on team building constantly from now on – this definitely lowers peer separation and bullying in the class and makes it much easier to work with youngsters”, said Svetlana M, from the secondary school in Vranje. Selma H., from Prijepolje also agreed with this and stated that in addition to all this group and team work, she, herself managed to talk more about sensitive topics, emotions and prejudice with her own daughter at home using some of the ‘tricks’ from Identity molecule unit.

The four quadrants topic, explaining that each and every person in the environment regardless of the age, status or background assumes a certain role in the group that affects the conflict, violence probability, or can prevent conflicts, was found as an eye opener among young people and teachers. Teachers pointed out also that for the first time they had time and opportunity to see their students as equal partners at each stage of that activity. “I was afraid of losing control and creating a chaos in the classroom, but what happened was that they had so many good ideas and offered help with various issues, that I had no idea they actually had observed as tricky. It actually seems that mutual respect has grown – they show their respect for what I know and accept what I say, but add their twist to it and I like this a lot. And I feel as part of the team with them, not someone who ‘knows it all’ and has come to judge them”, said a teacher from a school in Saranda, Albania.

“I used to say directly to others what I thought was not done well and it usually was not welcomed. Then I basically stopped commenting because I didn’t like conflicts. Since the training and reading the toolkit, I started thinking about not just saying that something was not good, but to say it in a different way by actually stating what I thought could be done to make it better. I can see that it is much better received and now, I first think how to say something before I actually open my mouth”, said Anja K, from Vranje, commenting on the topic of giving and receiving feedback.

Endri G, from Kukes said that he felt much more at ease when doing youth workshops since he learnt how to manage different group dynamics and he also added that 4 quadrants about violence topic changed his behaviour a lot: “I understood that in most cases I was just an observer and that by taking that position, I was helping perpetuate the violence. In the last year, I started confronting and stopping the behaviour that creates violence around me – I’m definitely not an observer anymore and it makes me feel much better”.



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At the focus group in Tirana, young people pointed out the “Ladder of participation” as one of the most influential topics from the Peer Training Curriculum. They stated that they realised that many times when they were thinking that they were participating (as class representatives in the Teachers’ Councils for instance) they were actually only manipulated or were there to make a nicer picture portraying the sheer presence of children as participation. They said that they felt that their opinions and suggestions were not asked for or accepted. Renato S, said: “I stopped participating in these things, now I only go where I know I can say what I think and people will listen. I don’t mind, I don’t mind much if other people disagree if they give me their reasons and arguments, and if majority agrees with that. I actually then think back at those arguments and sometimes I change my own opinion because of that. Sometimes my opinion prevails, sometimes not and it is OK. The important thing is that now I know what real participation looks like and I only participate when there is an atmosphere of real participation”.

The ‘Lemon exercise’ was also accepted as a very useful and needed illustration for the topic of prejudice. “It started as great fun and we laughed so much in the group when we were inventing the CV of our lemon. Throughout the process, including the presentation, we just had great fun. When the reflection part started and it actually showed us how each and every one has a long list of prejudice about certain groups, it was not funny at all. It was a very serious discussion and really moved me. The topic of prejudice is so important, but so often it is just one of many words that we hear and say, without thinking of the content. Now, among us who participated in the training, we often just say to one another – remember our lemon? - and instantly, we stop and reflect on the situation or a group of people we talk about”, said Marko J, (17) from Kucevo.

Genders’ list was one topic that brought about a lot of discussion at all focus groups. From the opinions that all introduced genders were “artificial invented words” to the realisation of the many ways an individual may feel and understand his/her gender, many different descriptions of the attitudes toward that topic were raised. During the interviews, this topic was also mentioned several times as the most controversial part of the toolkit and training. What we observed was that majority of the negative reflections related to this topic were coming from the adult youth workers in both Albania and Serbia. Simultaneously, this topic was also stated as one of the things that provided for most learning since the participants felt they learnt about genders they had never heard about existing.



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“I actually learnt new words since I had never heard of someone being agender or bigender. I can’t even imagine how someone feeling like that thinks. It doesn’t seem real, I don’t understand how someone can feel like a table – like a thing, and have no notion of gender belonging”, stated Djordje A. (17) from Bujanovac.

Two more topics were mentioned frequently as “attitude changing” ones: “Cards we are dealt” and “A Better Me”.

“It really made me think and kind of changed my attitude towards different people after we had ‘Cards we are dealt’ activity – I come from an average, mid-class family living in Belgrade where I can mix with anyone, feel comfortable speaking up and engaging in whatever interests me, but in the activity, I had a card which made me think and behave as a biracial person. I thought of some people I know of who are biracial in Belgrade, but I don’t know them personally, so I didn’t really think there was much difference. Then in Kukes, I met a few Belgian boys and girls who were participating in the youth exchange and they were telling me how difficult it was for them being partly African, partly European because they come from mixed marriages. Only then I remembered the activity and understood how awful it may be for them in our society. Now, I really admire them and want to reassure them that they do not need to classify themselves as part of any group, just be themselves and do what they feel like doing regardless of others say”, said Andrea R. (19) from Belgrade.

Youth workers from nonformal education (NGOs) pointed to the “A Better me” activity as a very powerful one in helping young people willingly embark on the road to consciously work towards reducing their prejudice and resentment towards anyone different from them. This statement in several forms was repeated both in the interviews with youth workers and in focus groups held almost a year after the initial training sessions at local levels.

“I have frequently been using ‘A Better me’ activity and can see that it has an effect on young people. Instead of anyone else telling them what they should do and how, after the main topics of the training have been covered, this activity gives them an opportunity to reflect and self-evaluate their own stands and feelings, to verbalise what and how they can do to be more welcoming of differences among their peers and I have seen the difference in some of them afterwards”, said Florida K. from Fier.



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“A Better me activity has been one of the crucial activities in almost all the local training sessions I have done this year – it has proven to be a really accepted way for improving tolerance and respect for diversity among young people. You can see that they really process all that they are exposed to during the training whilst doing this activity and it leads them to a concrete conclusion about the need to respect others’ choices, beliefs, characteristics. What’s more, I actually have done it myself and after all these years, it still helped me realise where I can change some of my ways of thinking and acting”, commented Karmen B., youth worker from Subotica.

2.2 Changes that the learning models - training cycles as they were constructed (having young people and youth workers as participants - trainees first, then as trainers themselves in their own environments) have had or inspired in the self-confidence, willingness to take action or include in the formal education teaching for young people and youth workers / teachers in Albania and Serbia

We analysed the impact which the presented and practiced methodology in both information sharing training sessions have had on the way youth workers work with young people. The analysis was based on: a) their first answers about the usefulness and possibilities for practical implementation of the learning models, various techniques used and explained, in the training sessions, which they gave during checkout sessions whilst still in the training, b) their comments during the interviews and c) their reflections during the focus groups.

Among majority of younger youth workers (on average up to 35-40 years of age), almost all techniques of active learning and experiential learning model presented were well accepted and regarded as practical, implementable and more engaging when they first reflected on them, and during the interviews and focus groups later, they also commented that these techniques and methods have been very well accepted by the young people too.

“I have been implementing some of these techniques in classroom – work in small groups, jigsaw technique and some of the activities – SMART, SWOT analysis, problem tree from the Aflatoun+ Programme, as well as team building, support the supporter, feedback giving from the Peer Training Curriculum not just related to the social and financial education, but in my own subjects”, said Dragana M., teacher from the secondary school in Uzice and added that the young people have been much more engaged and participated more actively when she used these learning models. “It takes much more time to prepare and organise in advance the whole new way of doing things and especially since you need to



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know the young people in the class in order to find the best way to create small groups in such a way that everyone can be active, but the results are much better”, she added.

“I have shown a few activities and explained thoroughly what we want out of them and how this can be achieved to a few 16-year-old pupils and then I let them organise the groups and lead the activities with me only supporting them. We discussed gender roles and expectations, gender equality and peer violence during the class hour. It proved to be very interesting for the pupils and since the curriculum for this hour is not fixed, I invited them to propose topics of their interest for this hour. For the first time in 18 years of work, I have a situation when young people want to be in the class for that hour, want to discuss their problems and listen to one another, listen to me and have asked for bringing in other adults – a school psychologist, representatives from the Parents’ Council and School Headmaster in order to have joint discussions about problems they faced in school”, said Jasmina G. from the Economy and trade Secondary school in Sopot.

Among the youth workers more set in their own classic ways of working, especially among teachers in the formal education system with longer teaching experience, some of the techniques were regarded as useful and practical, but there were also those that made them feel uncomfortable and basically fearing “loss of control” over as big a group as 30 young people in one class. Borivoj G., a teacher at secondary school in Kucevo was accepting that some of the models of learning could be implemented at school but that “they create much noise and then the other teachers would complain”. He did acknowledge that “creating small working groups within the class could be beneficial for young people when discussing certain issues since they may also be apprehensive of the teacher’s reaction if publicly giving their personal opinion, whilst within small groups they can contribute to the work of the group and then whatever the conclusion is, it is the group conclusion and doesn’t put anyone in the spotlight”.

Young people engaged in youth work embraced the learning methods and the related activities. In all the evaluations, interviews and focus groups in both countries, they felt that the methodology and techniques they learnt were completely changing the way they organised peer training sessions in their communities. They loved that the activities were: 1. Fun, 2. Educational, 3. Did not require a lot of equipment and resources that need to be paid for, 4. Enabling active participation of everyone. They also stated that they found some of the activities easy to implement, but that the discussion afterwards with the participants, their reflection and feedback were tricky parts and that they could see the



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improvements through experience in organising and leading these activities. For these elements they felt that more training from the experienced trainers would be beneficial. “All this is important, but the most important thing is to create a safe space for everyone and sometimes it is difficult. It is easier when you do it in another town than where everyone knows you, and where you know all the internal relationships in the group”, reflected Reilda M., from Tropoja.

“We are not taught to work like this at school, so only now, I have seen that even economic topics can be done differently and I think that my peers would also love this way of learning. Especially when we can practice the methodology through creating our own project. I have started helping some of my friends at school and I organised the activity like we did it at the social and financial education training – we went through the whole process of planning, budgeting, financial reporting for the project that eventually we did in our class. All of my friends understood the process and actually managed to improve their grades at school afterwards. If only teachers would also organise the classes like this”, said Adelisa H. (16) from Prijepolje.

“I have been implementing peer training methodology since I started working in the NGO sector. However, the choice and sequencing of the activities in both social and financial education and peer training sessions I found extremely good and I liked them a lot. It had always been somewhat difficult to train young people and especially teachers in SWOT and SMART analysis and how to use them. Through the approach in this toolkit and sequencing when to use them during the training, it has become much more effective. The way of approaching prejudice, stereotyping and gender inequality in the society I also found very helpful for the training sessions that I do in my organisation’s projects”, reflected Jelena P., from an NGO in Belgrade.

A few young people who were first the participants in the training and then organised local training sessions with the Partnere për Femijet and CYSO trainers’ support, all had very similar opinion – that it looked much easier when they were just active participants than when they were leading the training sessions. “I thought it was so clear and easy to do the training after we went through those two 6-day training sessions. Luckily, one of the CYSO trainers insisted to be our support in the background when we organised the training, so she could jump in and save me several times. I actually learnt a lot from it. My biggest problem was time management during the discussions, but also when trainees had very opposite opinions and I felt that they kind of waited for me to confirm who was ‘right’. This type of



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learning model requires experience and confidence and the only way to gain those is by doing it. So, when I did the second round of training sessions, I already felt much more confident and satisfied with how I did it. The feedback from the trainees was also good, so now, I think I can continue doing training sessions for my peers. This has helped me so much in gaining confidence to speak publicly, to keep the attention of others and I am sure this will also help me in my studies too”, said Stasa C. from a youth NGO.

“What I liked most was that at the 6-day training sessions both times, we were having real inter-generational groups where both older teachers and young youth workers, some of them also our pupils at school, were equal participants. At the beginning it felt very strange, but already at the second day morning activity, both the young ones and we forgot about who was a teacher and who was a pupil in ‘real life’ and we worked together as equals throughout the training sessions. This was very important revelation for me – I became very conscious of the fact that never before had I felt or accepted my pupils as my equals and when we actually worked together, it proved to be very successful. Since then, I organised a few workshops together for the pupils and their parents. It was actually fun watching the change in the approach, attitudes and even way of communication during these workshops among children and parents – the same thing was happening to them as it was happening to me at the first day of the training which we had. This not only improved my relationship with my pupils or with their parents, but this approach actually is helping improvement in their relationships with one another”, explained Gordana R., a teacher from Vranje.



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3. EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE CONTENT AND LEARNING MODELS ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUTH WORKERS IN ALBANIA AND SERBIA

Analysing and summarising the results of the analysis of all the gathered data in Albania and Serbia, we came to the conclusion that for young people, as well as for youth workers - their teachers and youth workers in civil society organisations in both countries, the impact of introducing the content and learning models from Aflatoon International in the Netherlands and EPTO in Belgium was very positive and visible.

The content of both toolkits inspired both young people and youth workers to examine their own attitudes, opinions, ways of behaviour in different situations and has also brought about a lot of reflection on the concrete situations and behaviours the participating young people and youth workers exhibited or witnessed.

Topics related to examining one's wants and needs, identity, those related to the planning processes both referring to one's individual goals and for social or financial action, analysis of the situation, one's position in a give situation, one's possible reactions, or strengths and weaknesses – all of these really inspired young people in particular to think, reflect and make planned steps for future actions. This was especially evident during the discussions in focus groups that took place almost a year after the training sessions.

Topics related to one's position in life, community, education, especially in view of one's gender, topics relevant for analysis of healthy and unhealthy relationships, hidden or open gender-based violence and inequality were referred to as "taboo" in formal education, but also in many places within families too, and therefore were considered as extremely important and needed to be included for all children and young people not only in their teen years but from early years. These, according to the participants in the interviews and focus groups actually changed the perspective and frequently the behaviour in daily situations in many young people. There was also evidence of young people trying to change the dynamics of the relationships in their own families.



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Prejudice, discrimination, both based on gender and ethnicity or social status including one's reaction to them (the 4 quadrants activity), were frequently commented upon as an eye opener for many young people, but also adults (teachers and NGO trainers alike). Several individual testimonies of changed position from an observer to a change-maker were given during the interviews and focus groups both in Albania and Serbia.

Planning, saving, budgeting, project development related topics, according to the interviewees, were the themes and topics which had the biggest impact among the young youth workers, especially those who were interested in starting, planning or leading youth projects. They claimed that the knowledge and tips from the training sessions and toolkits changed their whole planning and project designing processes. Since we talked to them almost a year after the training sessions, they were actually showing us also that they won a couple of grants for local projects which they had designed using the methodology introduced at the training sessions. Individually, although majority of the interviewees and participants in the focus groups claimed that these topics inspired them for making changes in their own personal planning and budgeting processes, it was frequently stated that they would appreciate more information and some additional topics related to the finances, financial services available and more training on these topics.

In terms of the learning models, teachers – youth workers in the formal education system stated that some of the methods and techniques shown within social and financial education training, indeed proved to be very useful, easy to implement and that they started using them regardless of the subject they taught. Some of the techniques and methods, some teachers (especially older ones) thought to be potentially disruptive for those in neighbouring classrooms since they cause more physical movement and noise made by young people involved.

In view of the peer training learning model – horizontal learning methods, all respondents and participants were stating that it impacted their way of thinking and working. Teachers were stating that they introduced a model when a group of young people would actually prepare the lesson and lead it for other young people in the class and that this proved to be a very good model where both the “trainers” and other young people understood and learnt better.



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Youth workers from the civil society commented that the stress on reflection and feedback was the extremely useful and productive, that they were incorporating these two elements in much better and thought through way since the training.

Reflection after each activity and feedback from and to the trainers and trainees were regarded as most influential parts of the peer training – horizontal learning process. It was evaluated as crucial in the process of improvement of knowledge and skills both of the youth workers and trainees. The principles of giving a constructive feedback, according to the interviewees and participants in the focus groups, also helped in the individual relationships of any kind – this newly acquired skill and its principles impacted how they were discussing and commenting on other people’s behaviour, attitudes or actions in and outside school.

Young people as well as youth workers including teachers also commented that it was a completely new experience for them to be together as equal participants at any training and that this changed their understanding, views and relationships between and among the teachers, other youth workers and young people.



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4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Through all the discussions in the interviews and focus groups and based on the evaluations of the 6-day information sharing training and local training sessions, we received a lot of information what would/could make the toolkits for social and financial education and for peer training even more useful and impactful for young people and for youth workers. There have been many recommendations stated also in terms of learning models that would help pass the messages from the toolkits more widely understood, accepted and implemented. We have grouped all these recommendations into the recommendations concerning the content and the recommendations concerning the learning models.

4.1 Recommendations related to the content of the learning materials

4.1.1 The content of the social and financial education programme toolkit

In the Aflatoun+ Programme for Girls in Albania and Serbia, most recommendations tackle the financial and entrepreneurial units, although there were also a few recommendations related to the units about My Body, My choices and My Rights, My Ideas.

- ◆ The unit about Rights need to be more focussed on the rights of individual young people, and the responsibilities of the family, school and community to enable the rights of the young people, the UN Conventions are needed, but only in broad terms, since they are too general and are about the country in general
- ◆ Topics related to the rights need to include more specific rights and explanation related to the gender equality in family, community and the girls' rights to educational and financial independence and career
- ◆ More material, space and content should be devoted to prevention of gender-based violence, and, depending on the country, to the information to whom one can turn for protection from gender based cyber bullying, sexual and peer violence both in and outside school
- ◆ Unit related to My Money, My Plans needs to give more useful information on all the things related to personal bank accounts, living costs, using financial services from various sources,



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electronic banking, buying and selling since during the lockdowns, it has become a very much needed knowledge and skills to have

- ◆ In the unit My Enterprise, there should also be parts related to looking for a job, applying, questions to ask and behaviour at the job interviews, but also related to career guidance, learning/studying in different places/countries
- ◆ At least basic stuff about rights and responsibilities as employees for young people would be beneficial to have, contracts, trade unions,

4.1.2 The content of the peer training curriculum

In the Peer training curriculum, most of the recommendations are about the peer training and horizontal learning that can be and should be included in the formal education as well as in nonformal: style of teaching at schools that need to involve active learning methods, peer training, workshops and debates. Some of the recommendations also tackle the theoretical background to the learning models presented.

- ◆ In the Peer training curriculum, there should be more explanation about experiential learning, different types of learning models, personal development
- ◆ There should be more tips about organising, conducting and leading inter-generational peer trainings, creating safe space when there are participants of different ages, experience and knowledge about the topic together
- ◆ There should be pre-preparation unit which would include tips and methodology for creating a safe and encouraging space for the trainees from the beginning (secret friend envelopes or just friendly envelopes, welcoming individual messages, culture in a box)
- ◆ There should be guidance or creating and strengthening peer partnerships between formal and nonformal education which would be useful both for teachers and youth workers on how to organise joint training opportunities

4.2 Recommendations related to the learning models



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Learning methods discussed, presented and practiced in the toolkits and training inspired a lot of discussion right after the training sessions, but also during the interviews and focus groups. The main recommendations related to this topic could be summarised as follows:

- ◆ Whenever possible, peer training sessions should be organised as inter-generational events where both young youth workers from the nonformal education system and teachers from the formal education system would be equal participants
- ◆ When possible, intercultural, international, or at least regional peer training sessions should be organised so that the participants can experience overcoming prejudice, communication barriers and stereotypes whilst being concentrated on a joint focus – thus mirroring what local young people are facing in daily lives and gaining the first-hand experience to be used at local training sessions
- ◆ Interactive activities with a focus on reflection after each one and constructive feedback should be part of each learning model be it in formal or nonformal education system



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