



Catalonia working with Europe

Supporting the active participation of Catalan institutions and citizens in European cooperation

#CATALONIA WORKING WITH EUROPE COMMENT#

WHY LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED ADULTS NEED NEW CAPACITY BUILDING

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We increasingly develop new directions for long-term unemployed adults in severe dead-end situations. Why is that necessary?

Because the old ways do not work anymore... Things have changed. In the old days long-term unemployment could be addressed through short vocational re-training, through different forms of “second chance”-learning - or through personal empowerment of the adults.

The problem now is that labour markets and social life change so fast that we don't know what “re-training” should consist in; and even if “re-trained”, there is probably no employment opportunities anyway.

Even the traditional way of seeing entrepreneurship as an option is not credible anymore. Can we imagine millions of long-term unemployed establishing a business?

Long-term unemployment, low skills, age, social crisis and forced life change is increasingly mixed and challenges us to find new and more holistic approaches. The answer cannot be: create your own company or enrol in the teacher education at the university.

What long-term unemployed need is therefore dramatically different capacity building, closely linked to manage change, to spot all sorts of opportunities in the community, to create “projects” or “missions” in which they can be players, to mobilize resources and to build up any kind of organisational framework around such initiatives - like associations, clubs, enterprises, NOG's, whatever.

You do not build such capacity in a few weeks, or even months. And you cannot buy an instruction folder on how to do it.

You need to work your way through such scenarios in practice and learn on the flight.

Why?

Because it is not simply about learning about a new subject or developing a new skill.

It is about developing capacity to manage change, to take action, to create something that was not there - and most importantly to build the capacity to do this again and again whenever needed.

In short, it is not about learning specific things, as we don't know what can create economies in 5 years, but about managing the situation at large, about not being knocked-out by change and about turning change and threats into opportunities.

This is not easy, but it is necessary. And it can be done in an unlimited number of ways.

Adult education and labour market services cannot offer such long-term capacity building. Therefore we need to find new models for how to do this, how to finance it, how to mobilize the needed resources and how to change mentality in the community to support such provisions.

This is what several new European initiatives are about.