News

VERSO, a European initiative to fight unemployment

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Verso is a European research and development project whose aim is to explain how volunteering can help European authorities in fighting unemployment and improving the quality of life of jobless people.

Specifically, VERSO concentrates on looking for **volunteering projects** whose help to the **social and labour integration of their participants and the volunteers to develop the project**. All these projects must meet the particular demand of improving the volunteers' employability, meaning the development of their own attitudes and skills when realizing their tasks contributes to facilitating their own occupation. These projects have been included in the list of Best Practices Project.

This project is financed by the **European Regional Development Fund (INTERREG IVC, European Union)** and lasts for three years. In the project also collaborates the Departament de Benestar Social i Família de la Generalitat de Catalunya and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona along with 10 other partners from 8 different countries. Together they selected five volunteer initiatives to join the Catalan catalog. Below is a summary of these projects:

1. Volunteers in Business Advice (Voluntaris en Assessoria Empresarial, VAE): We make inclusion possible

This is a **senior volunteering project** about accompaniment and tutorship of **unemployed people** searching for a job and for **entrepreneurial assistance**. Its target are vulnerable groups that need a close professionalized support, one that suits their specific demands. The sources of inspiration and volunteers that make it possible is a group of retired entrepreneurs, managers and executives willing to share their knowledge and the experience they acquired during their professional life, and also willing to assume an active role in the **construction of civil society.**

Volunteers taking part in this project get involved not only upon their knowledge, but also contributing with proximity and an **individualized support**.

2. Fundació Èxit: Projecte Coach

This initiative on **corporate volunteering** consists of a structured program to train professional skills. A team made up of volunteers from several firms supports and facilitates a **first contact with the world of work for youngsters** who mainly experienced school failure and lack any reference point in terms of labour within their family or environment.

The methodology applied is **coaching**, which sets an accompanying action by the volunteer to promote new visions of reality and chances of **personal and professional development** for the user. This project also intends that **business volunteering** and the firms themselves play a role in the professional training of young, socially disadvantaged people. They become motivating and positive reference points and help the participants in finding the clues of the working world.

3. Fundació per a la reinserció de dones (ARED): Obrint la porta a la Rehabilitació (Foundation for the reinclusion of women (ARED): Opening the door for Rehabilitation)

This association aims at **improving the employability chances** of groups that find difficulties to access the working market, mainly **women** coming out of **prison**. It works on a comprehensive basis. This means, the program touches on the improvement of the womens' employability as well as on the attention and intervention regarding the individual needs of each of them.

The methodology applied allows the intervention of a multidisciplinary team made up of professionals and volunteers. Through this, it is possible to customize the supporting action for each of the participants.

4. Punt de referència. Referents program

The referents program offers a **volunteer adult referent** to young people who request it. This referent helps young people adressing their needs.

The association facilitates contact between young volunteers and ensures that the development of this relationship is constructive and **beneficial for both parts**. Mainly provides to young people an emotional, playful, linguistic and social support. Furthermore, it provides coaching in the employment and housing search.

The users are young people under tutelage or at risk of social exclusion, from **17 to 23 years**.

5. Casal dels infants d'acció als barris: Personal autonomy project

The project is managed by Casal dels Infants, an organisation working for the social action in many neighbourhoods. The main objective of that project is to **achieve the social and economic autonomy of young people**, and also to make able that people to access to the usual social fabric. The project is above all focused on improving the social abilities as a way to improve the social insertion.

The people engaged in that project are **young people who were under tutelage** and also young people **without a social support network**.

Tags: volunteering
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