

FHD Fachhochschule Dresden
Staatlich anerkannte Hochschule
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BISCHOF
BENNOHAUS


SÄCHSISCHE
JUGENDSTIFTUNG

 Erasmus+

Between Ages

Five days between prison
and Santiago de Compostela
Social educational pilgrimage in Saxony

Output 8

Between Ages:

Network for young offenders and NEET



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Between Ages: Network for young offenders and NEET

Programme: Erasmus+

Identifier: 2015-2-DE04-KA205-012982

Projektkoordination: Fachhochschule Dresden (FHD), Germany

Partner: Bischof-Benno-Haus, Germany / Alba, Belgium / Seuil,
France / MINISTERO DELLA GIUSTIZIA, Italy, / L'Oasi Società
Cooperativa Sociale, Italy / Associazione Lunghi Cammini, Italy

Kooperation: Sächsische Jugendstiftung

This project has been funded with support from the European
Commission. This publication reflects the views of the author only, and
the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be
made of the information contained therein.

Large parts of this report were taken with friendly permission from a
self-report and the evaluation of the project "Zwischen den Zeiten":
Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016) / Teichert u.a. (2015)

Herausgeber:
Fachhochschule Dresden
Günzstraße 1, 01169 Dresden
www.fh-dresden.eu
Redaktion: Karsten König

Titlepage:
König (Jacobsweg Dresden, Tharant)
Design based on the results of a seminar
by Manuela Vock (FHD) and a draft of Thomas Memel

Juli 2017

www.fh-dresden.eu
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1 Introduction

In the German model of walking with NEET's and offenders it is the idea to make a very short extract of the concept of pilgrimage. It is tried to use methods, which start a sustainable development in only a few days. The way in Germany which is developed and offered by the Saxon Youth Foundation (Sächsische Jugendstiftung, SJS) has regular a duration of one week. In order to use this short time intensively, most of the time is clearly structured and combined with a certain pedagogical method. Most important parts of this method will be explained in the following text. Very important is the use of traditional pilgrimage routes and the cooperation with the hostels in the pedagogical concept. This cooperation is important, because the NEET's and offenders has to do some community service work during the walk, which is done in cooperation with the hostels. Thus Hostels are important in two aspects: First, this is the place where the community service work, to which the offenders has been sentenced by law, can be done. On the other hand the NEET's and offenders meet to completely different ideas of life, while staying and working at the hostels. This helps to reflect their own idea of life and thus is important for the individual development. Both aspects will be shown later in this text.

Since 1990 in Germany, the 'social skills training course' is part of the catalogue of judicial instructions in the Youth Courts Law. Focusing on first offenders at the beginning with growing experience it became obvious that it is especially suitable for juvenile and adolescent multiple and habitual offenders. Custodial measures that have been preferred by most judges have experienced a loss in rating, as the recurrence rate is about 70 per cent, in contrast to ambulant measures where about 30 per cent of juveniles relapse. The 'social skills training course' aims at fostering social competences, getting to know socially responsible behaviour, training a sense of responsibility, acquiring communication and conflict skills and reflecting one's social interaction and meaning of life even concerning the offence.¹

The working and pilgrimage path that has been developed by the Sächsische Jugendstiftung (Saxon Youth Foundation) within their project 'Zwischen den Zeiten' (Between the Ages) is directed within Youth Courts Law as a special form of the 'social skills training course'². This special training course aims at adolescents that have to do community service work and should

¹Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 3. https://www.saechsische-jugendstiftung.de/files/sjs/dokumente/Sa%CC%88chsische%20Jugendstiftung_Ergebnisbericht%202015_Pilgern%20eine%20Methode%20der%20Sozialen%20Arbeit.pdf (26.6.2018)

²Youth Courts Law (Jugendgerichtsgesetz, JGG), Sec. 10 (2) Nr. 1: „(1) Instructions shall be directions and prohibitions by which the youth can conduct his life and which are intended to promote and guarantee his education. Instructions must not place unreasonable demands on the way the youth conducts his life. In particular, the judge may instruct the youth to: [...] 6.attend a social skills training course, [...]

think about themselves while going on a pilgrimage. Participants are offered an opportunity to do their community service work within a short period of time and simultaneously work on their social competences.³ Moreover, Jobcentres do also have the possibility to offer young unemployed to participate voluntarily.

'Between the Ages' is connected to a century old tradition, invites to consider thoughts before, whilst and after pilgrimage.⁴ The programme has been established in 1997 by resolution of the Saxon Parliament, with the main aim to initiate means of inspiration for generations of young people.⁵

*'With the programme 'Between the Ages' we deliberately broaden our perspective by less socially recognised target groups, we developed the cooperation with and the support of young offenders and violent criminals, young adults with failed training and job biographies as well as adolescents in stages of transition and reorientation. To accompany these young people on a significant part of the way of their life and together with them search for their ground breaking answers to the many questions of life has been and is the aim of the programme. After in total 3000km per feet, 6210 hours of community service work and 37 routes with over 320 young people the approach of 'Between the Ages' has proven as method of social work.'*⁶

In the following we will show the design of the project 'Between the Ages' based on a self-description by the responsible organisation⁷ as well as an evaluation report prepared by a team of researchers led by Prof. Angela Teichert from the Fachhochschule Dresden⁸. Aspects that will be taken into consideration in the next pages are: Conception, especially framework, settings and methods as well as the intensity of intervention; Participants, giving an overview about their identity and affiliations as well as their development within the project and the role of the group; Trainers, their qualifications and regulative behaviour; and Patrons, having to accompany the participants also after the project. The concluding summary will also go further and give some ideas about the development of the project.

³Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 3.

⁴Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.7. https://www.saechsische-jugendstiftung.de/files/sjs/dokumente/Sa%CC%88chsische%20Jugendstiftung_Zwischen%20den%20Zeiten.pdf (16.7.2018)

⁵Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.8.

⁶Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.3.

⁷Sächsische Jugendstiftung 2016: Zwischen den Zeiten

⁸Teichert et. al. 2015: Ergebnisbericht

2 Conception

On a five-day trip from Monday to Friday, a group of young people is going on a pilgrimage from Bautzen to Dresden walking 65 km on three days and working two days. They are accompanied by a qualified trainer and a so-called 'patron'. Before going on the pilgrimage, participants get instructions about the travelling luggage as well as finances. They are responsible for their luggage and the preparation and have to pay a small amount of money for food.

A Memorial for pilgrims that has been built by the participants in 2015 along their route as part of their social reparation serves as unique long-term point of identification and memory.⁹ This is only one very impressive example of how the project is aiming at initiating a long-term personal development of the juveniles, having a holistic and individual approach. The juveniles experience a 'biographical time out' through an episodic removal of their familiar environment, representing a symbolic transition.¹⁰ It is harder for participants to terminate this measurement. As the project is mainly based on individual responsibility and self-organisation of the adolescents, the participants can at any time decide on their own whether to call a social-pedagogue and to what extent they involve him or her in their personal biography and questions of development.¹¹

The combination of monotone walking and simple physical work is well suited to think about personal development, experienced successes and defeats, dilemmas and perspectives.¹² The steady offers of educational units encouraged questioning and changing own concepts.¹³

For example the way could go in this form:

Monday:

- Meeting the group on a central point.
- Explanation and instruction about rules and sanctions
- Walk of 20 km
- On the evening: educational unit about "Ideas of Living"

"At the meeting point I thought, this a very strange people. And as Mr. E. was speaking to us, I thought he was a trainer at the military. I did not want to participate any longer, since I missed my fiancée incredible at this point. Though I was not used to long walks, the landscape and the praise of here had given me the power to go on."

⁹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.11.

¹⁰Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 11.

¹¹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.10.

¹²Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.24.

¹³Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.24.

Tuesday:

- Doing community service work as physical work (handcraft, work in house, garden, wood or building) at the hostel.
- On the evening: educational unit about the "Heinz-dilemma" by Kohlbert

It was cool. The people at the hostel were very kind at us, which I had not actually thought. The work was fun, but in the end I was a bit exhausted and got sunburned.

Wednesday:

- 30 km walk to the next hostel, while the participants have to think, in which dilemma they might actually be.
- The participants have to collect money, plan for four meals and do the shopping.
- Participants have to do the cooking.
- Short educational unit.

"The longest and most hard day. The view was great on the mountain, but after 20 or 25 km hurt me all, and I had seriously planned to break off. But the thought to my girlfriend helped me. The shopping was useless since two of us bought chips for 3-4 Euro and they will need the money later. The Hostel was great. No Christianity in sight.

Thursday:

- Doing community service
- Educational unit about the three main questions of a pilgrimage: where do I come from? Where am I? Where do I turn to?
- Participants grill at the evening.

"I have learned not only to think of myself, but also to involve the others"

"Today was a pleasant day, working but not exhausting! You could very well think about everything that is going on at home on your head, sometimes even about possible solutions!"

Friday:

- Walking to the destination (app. 20 km)
- Getting a certificate and Farewell to the coach
- Last way with the patron
- Farewell to all

"Through this trip, I realized that there is more in life than hanging around stupid. ... And here again thanks to Mr. E. Thank you, that have accompanied me and have stimulated me to think. You are a good person." ¹⁴

Special aspect of the program is that it serves complexity as well as constancy that offer space for individual responsibility and exceptional learning chances. ¹⁵ By doing so, 'Between the Ages' is focusing on the following **fundamental and effective elements** ¹⁶:

- *Independent preparation*
- *Monotony of walking/hiking in a group setting*
- *Division of the route*
- *Useful work*
- *Lodging in foreign houses*
- *Encountering other people*
- *Educational offers*

¹⁴Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.16f..

¹⁵Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.22.

¹⁶Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.22.

These elements are supported by different methods: experience of nature and of one's own physical being while having an intensive experience of motion; spiritual or touristic aims are less important, but being in a foreign region is of high significance.¹⁷ Therefore, the following **learning aims** are to be accomplished¹⁸:

- *Social competence*
- *Development of personality*
- *Ecological awareness*
- *Responsibility for actions*

Positive impacts on those learning aims have been clearly confirmed¹⁹. The participants have significantly developed or increased respectively their decision-making and social competence, their personal development as well as their ecological awareness: *"The monotony is strengthening the self-awareness and is creating space for reflexion, revision and renewal."*²⁰

3 Participants

Several formal requirements for the participation in 'Between Ages' had been defined. First, the adolescent must be older than 18 years, as this age implies the age of legal and criminal responsibility in Germany. If there had been persons involved that were younger than 18, a special pedagogical protection would have been required as well as the individual journey home in case of a termination would not have been practicable. In addition, a certain physical basic condition was necessary. Persons with addiction problems had to be admitted depending on the individual case and context. Finally, and maybe most important, participants needed to have an inner willingness to engage themselves in this special kind of project.²¹

Bearing those prerequisites in mind, the **target group** has changed during the project's duration. At the beginning, the project was designed as a special mobile social training course for young people older than 18 as a sanction for a juvenile crime. After one year the target group has been adjusted to young people that are in a process of learning, educating and searching respectively that to say²²:

- *Apprentices*
- *Young people in social voluntary services*
- *Job seekers (younger than 25)*
- *Dropouts*

¹⁷Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.10.

¹⁸Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.10.

¹⁹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.24.

²⁰Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.24.

²¹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.26.

²²Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.11.

Participants are however differing, in their personal origin and wishes, but they are similar considering their search for personal fulfilment, the meaning (of life).²³ As every adolescent is facing very individual different tasks in his very own development process, age is not necessarily a reliable indicator.²⁴ All of the participants are united by facing three big questions²⁵: *'Where am I from?' 'Where am I now?' 'Where do I go?'*

Participants were also chosen due to the fact that those juveniles would not have met their obligations to do community service work under normal circumstances.²⁶ It is proven, that the sentence of community service work can be managed in such context.²⁷

Besides this opportunity to fulfil 60 hours of community service work in just one week, several factors have been stated that **motivated the participants**²⁸:

- *Fun*
- *Variety*
- *Choice*
- *Social interaction*
- *Feedback*
- *Challenge*
- *Appreciation*
- *Measurement of success as well as fault tolerance*

Supplementing legal requirements and motivation learning aims had been set, as stated before. As the evaluation report has shown variously, the personal competences of the participants had been influenced positively. Self-efficacy is supported and encouraged by showing the adolescents how to achieve a certain goal by becoming aware of their corresponding competences.²⁹ Challenges that the participants are facing are close to their life implying that they will be able and achieve the competences to live their life independently. The participants had to build beds, prepare their meals, including planning and buying ingredients with money from all the participants beforehand. They learn procedures that are solution-oriented and structured to sensitise them for a change in perspectives. Moreover their competences to organize themselves and solve problems were strengthened. By doing so the adolescents experienced appreciation that highly motivated them.³⁰

²³Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.7.

²⁴Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.9f.

²⁵Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.9.

²⁶Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 14.

²⁷Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 13.

²⁸Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 17.

²⁹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.23.

³⁰Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 18.

The learning effect concerning a change in attitude and behaviour is more effective and sustainable if emotional, social and physical aspects are approached simultaneously. After the intensive one-week sanction participants stated that they have been affected emotionally, it encouraged them immensely that they kept up the whole week, letting the authors assume a sustainable learning affect.³¹ Participants not only sometimes reached their personal limits of physical exposure but every day there were group and individual meetings and discussions to reflect their own situation and show approaches for problem solving. They also learned to communicate weaknesses and work with those approaches.³² The completed tasks have been done task-based and independently by the juveniles, they have been motivated to work and proud, it was fostering their personal development and self-efficacy.³³ The great spatial distance was seen as a benefit by all parties involved.³⁴

Totally unpredictable but very interesting and refreshing were the casual encounterings with other people that fostered the acquisition of new roles and behaviour patterns.³⁵ It was new to the young pilgrims that those people faced them openly, without any judgement or prejudice.³⁶ To avoid the labelling approach which in this case refers to the young offenders who include the negative role that is ascribed to them in their self-concept, the selection of the pilgrims' lodges is of significant importance as well as challenge.³⁷

4 *Group settings and dynamics*

Besides the focus is set on the individual, group dynamics are not to be neglected. Whilst the participants are in one age group, their origin, social environment and concept of life are differing, sometimes to a great extent. Adolescents with migration background walked together with young people showing a significant racist thought pattern. Remarkably those stereotypes of every-day-living were not any longer important for the group which concentrated on managing the route and their common goal. The clash of cultures and different living worlds in this case supported tolerance and acceptance.³⁸

The group in this context can be seen as medium for growing and development. Due to the fact that the group is at first unfamiliar to every participant and at the same time they need to rise jointly to new and extreme challenges rather quick, a rapid grouping and group cohesion as well

³¹Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 18.

³²Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 13.

³³Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.24.

³⁴Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.24.

³⁵Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 17.

³⁶Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.23.

³⁷Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.24.

³⁸Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 17.

as group dynamics can be fostered. By having a relaxed group atmosphere, communication can be open and trustfully. Between Ages is also a perfect opportunity to encourage friendships that supports the perseverance and lasts on a very special and intensive common experience.³⁹

Group games also contribute to the extension of decision-competence in a group as well as in their personal development. The dynamic of the group and the roles the participants take up as well as the development of the project are significantly influenced by the trainer. The trainer is able to intervene into the group dynamic if it seems endangered. He can also encourage participants to try out other roles, leaving their personal comfort zone and striking role types. It was important that nobody has pushed to the fore or has been left behind; the trainer used group dynamical games to balance these symptoms.⁴⁰

5 Trainers

To make this project successful, besides an extraordinary management, trainers who are not only well qualified but open to new methods, flexible and impartial are the foundation. The attitude of the trainer towards the participants must be unprejudiced, appreciative and at the same time preserving a professional distance.⁴¹ Juveniles have been supported and encouraged individually, they as an individual person are the point of departure for pedagogical ways of thinking and acting. Simultaneously, trainers contribute to the participant's personal development and finding and thus to the crime prevention. It was one of the goals of the trainers to offer support individually including appropriate working tasks and suitable learning fields matching the individual level.⁴² Moreover, useful work is increasing the adolescents' awareness for career choices.⁴³ Trainers tried to adapt to the participant's needs and interests and offered diverse activities. Trainers are using a solution oriented handling and support the willingness of the young people to develop own solution approaches and allow changes in perspective. One of their aims is to support adolescents to work on their mostly negative self-concept.⁴⁴ A perfect communication basis is established by an equal encountering of trainer and adolescents. 'Equal Footing' as well as a respectful and consequent interaction was indispensable for the success of the project.⁴⁵

By adapting to the group and each individual's level, especially regarding the educational units, the trainer intensified the experience and prepared a possible transfer to their every-day-life.

³⁹Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 20.

⁴⁰Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 21.

⁴¹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.23.

⁴²Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 15.

⁴³Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 14.

⁴⁴Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.23.

⁴⁵Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 19.

The persons consulted for the evaluation of the project stated that the participants were demanded, but never overstrained. The content of the units was well understood and reached the juveniles. The professional operation of the trainer and the orientation on the 'Plus-One-Convention' of moral education (Laurence Kohlberg) have been evaluated as very successful. Moral education supports self-reflection regarding the own moral thinking, judging and behaviour.⁴⁶ Neubert defines the following requirements to a trainer in this project as physical and mental resilience and high reflectivity, as well as tolerance, authenticity, rigor and consistency. At the same time, the project presupposes the readiness for this particular form of work on the part of the trainer and knowledge of the path as well as good networking in the respective region.⁴⁷

6 Community service work

Since the law in Germany focusses on community service work, it is not possible to do a walk without work as a legal requirement in most cases. The hostels provide the opportunity to do this community service work. They are often non-profit-institutions, do not have much money and thus the provided work can be defined as community orientated. The walks, which are provided by the Saxionian Youth Foundation, include two full days off work, regularly on Tuesday and Thursday (see section 2). In a methodological view, these working days are very important for the idea of the walk. First the requirements change completely, second the participants do not have to walk on this days. Participants, who are not familiar to walking, get the chance on these working-days to show a good performance in working and thus may gain a personal success. Also this days are for all participants a phase of recovery, since most of the participants are not used to long distance walks.

Second all participants experience on this day, what the judicial instruction means, if they would not have the chance to participate at the walk. Different to the walking, the trainer does not take part in the work. The participants feel this as unjust and ask: "why are you allowed to rest on this day?" The answer is simply "because we are not sentenced to community work!" This response seems a little cynical at first sight, but this shows very clearly, what judicial instruction means: that someone is no longer allowed to do what he wants, but he has to follow the instructions of the judicial system. This gives a very easy and clearly to understand picture of the actual real situation of the participants.

⁴⁶Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 19.

⁴⁷Neupert, Stephanie: Pilgern mit straffällig gewordenen Jugendlichen – die Rolle des Trainers. Bachelorarbeit 2017 FHD.

The trainer stay in the background on this day and intervene only if the participants refuse to work, are completely overwhelmed or in any emergency case. The young persons are included in the procedures in the hostel completely and accompanied by the personal of the hostel on this day. This intensive cooperation with the hostels allows the intensive encounter to other concepts of life as described above. Even if there are many misunderstandings and unplannability, these are the places and times in which intensive encounters take place and in which completely different lifestyles are involved. How this is perceived and commented on by young participants should be illustrated here with a few comments and quotes:

It was good to see that there are still people who do not condemn you because you have made mistakes in life and you do not treat as a serious criminal.

Today was a pleasant day, busy but not too exhausting! You could very well think about everything that is just a homecoming at home, sometimes also about possible solutions! I did not really learn anything today !?

Pilgrims. For me it was best that I could think and calm down.

Monday: Was it puke. Wanted to give it up after 1 hour.

Tuesday: I mowed lawns there and my mood was better.

Monday: At the agreed time / meeting point I thought that very funny people are present

Tuesday: The morning in the first hostel was pleasant, not even pain I had. The work did not really bother, the only two disruptive factors were only the Rumgekasper and second the crucifixes and even all believers.

Monday: Was unusual to walk 20 km. I did not think so.

Tuesday: It had been cool. The people in the hostel were very nice to us, which I did not think. The work was fun, but in the end I was a bit exhausted and sunburned. =)

The external perception of the young people can be described a piece from the perspectives of the two caretakers, who are responsible for the care of young adults in the St. Benno House.⁴⁸ It becomes clear above all that the participating men leave a very different impression. Some seem to be well prepared for the task, others have set out with "flip-flops and rolling suitcases". There were also young men who were physically fit and committed to doing their jobs ("pull through") while others were less motivated: "There were some who tried to do as much as possible, but there were some, they pulled through. And if it really took off, then you had to affirm the matter and say, either this is now or you can go, then it was' or something." Consistent in

⁴⁸Interview am ____ mit Ansgar Hoffmann (Referent und Projektpartner im Benno-Haus).

the implementation of tasks and, for example, in the renunciation on the phone during working hours, the two janitors seems an important requirement.

Occasionally, on the sidelines of the work assignments, there are conversations with the young adults, in which they report on how you - in part, according to their opinion, without their own intervention - were involved in criminal offenses. In many cases, there is a distinction to men actually imprisoned in custody. The atmosphere at the work assignments is described as normal, some groups would have understood each other well.

Although the profit for the house depends on the work to be done and also on the possibilities (eg suitable weather), the janitors describe the project as "profit for the house". Especially works where success is visible are also seen as a benefit for the young men: "I think that they took something along as well. That they have seen how to work all day. And, above all, it was always like that, if you had a job where you could say in the end, so I did that for the evening, look at it, that's done, that's ... a bit Sense and ... you see something "

7 The Project's direct environment: Patrons and Accommodations

Not only have the participants had benefits from the project but also the patrons: walking together for a while (most of the time for a few hours on the last day) helped to start a conversation. Going on a short pilgrimage with the juveniles fostered the perception and the own realistic expectations towards the young people.⁴⁹ Patrons are also given the possibility to experience themselves while walking together in order to share the idea und working approach as multipliers.⁵⁰ In the interview with the research team of the FH Dresden, a juvenile courts judge for instance, whose possibilities of judicial instructions are not stated conclusively in the Youth Courts Law, reported that he enriched and extended the scope of action.⁵¹

On the other hand, patrons from the Jobcentres reported that it is harder for them to motivate the eligible clients to participate on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless they confirmed, that 'Between Ages' helped more sustainable concerning the clients' development than for instance application training or qualification measures. Youths on the threshold of adulthood are given orientation and responsibility, the personal impact of the pilgrimage stays long-term.⁵²

The Youth Welfare Office as another patron is evaluating the project as innovative, attractive and effective and is totally recommending this procedure. Professionals are fostered to adopt a

⁴⁹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.25.

⁵⁰Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.11.

⁵¹Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 22.

⁵²Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 22f.

neutral and professional attitude, recognize the juvenile as expert for his or her life, environment and problems and offers alternative perspectives and behaviours. Past actions and experiences fade into the background and new experiences are made. Especially participants from rural areas who are not able to attend every day courses due to the lack of public transport can also join.⁵³

Social pedagogues of Voluntary Youth Welfare Organisations have especially praised the combination of community service work and experiential education elements. Professionals also recognized that they themselves profited practically and theoretically by the professional work and guidance of the project manager. Already existing measurements in the particular organisations could be extended through the project and especially the empowerment approach that it totally satisfies.⁵⁴

Last but not least the pilgrims' lodges also benefitted as they reached young people that assumingly would have never visited such institution besides work has been done in and around the housing. As it was reported the project manager of 'Between Ages' tried several lodges but eventually ended up with those on the current route, which are reliable, suitable for the project and are willing to commit. Frequently 'two worlds' collide, when young offenders and 'normal' pilgrims as well as employees of the institutions meet, however it is good to open each other's horizon.⁵⁵



Pic.1: Starting a walk at the Bischof-Benno-Haus (Foto: Enger)

⁵³Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 23f.

⁵⁴Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 24f.

⁵⁵Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 25f.

8 Conclusion and Recommendations

When it comes to a certain sentences it is often questioned how intense or appropriate regarding intervention a certain measurement in relation to the offence is. Although the programme 'BetweenAges' is evaluated as rather intense concerning the intervention a relation to self-reflection is assumed. Especially the physical and mental efforts are experienced as a very intense intervention. However the accomplishment of these challenges fosters the personal development and self-efficacy, as the situations along the way are onerous and challenging but can be met. Most of the participants have no job and no daily routine; in this one week they are challenged in various manners, especially leaving their known environment, still this intervention is legitimate. Also the waiver of consume goods, i.e. cell phones, can be seen as intense intervention, supporting the process of self-efficacy thus being an essential prerequisite for reflection. Nevertheless concerning social bonds, the project is not an intense intervention as most of the participants have scarce social contacts.⁵⁶

The participants had the chance to leave their own comfort zone and go into the learning and growing zone⁵⁷. By not having to choose to participate every week, participants stay in a consistent setting that combines positive main ideas of community service with social skills training course and experiential pedagogical measurements.⁵⁸ However, most of the participants were not perfectly prepared for the long walking, concerning equipment, luggage, and most of all, their physical condition. Such leisure activities were not habitual to the participants.⁵⁹

The participants demonstrably change their thought patterns through the offer of education units they widened their knowledge horizon and are able to reflect themselves more constructively.⁶⁰ This aspect can also be related to the well-considered choice of the target group. This project totally suits the help of young offenders but also of young unemployed under 25 being at the threshold of the independent working life.⁶¹

The framework is always essential to such a project. 'Between Ages' managed it perfectly to arrange a professional network with a coordinated cooperation and mutual feedback considering organizational as well as professional aspects. The stakeholders especially emphasized the

⁵⁶Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 26ff.

⁵⁷Learning Zones Model of Wygotski

⁵⁸Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 10.

⁵⁹Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 12.

⁶⁰Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 14.

⁶¹Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.26.

close contact to the project manager as well as the constant update of the project due to new experiences and results and are wishing for a steady cooperation.⁶²

‘Between Ages’ is characterized by a high level efficiency and effectiveness, the chosen methods are leading to the desiderated goal, that is reached with a small expenditure (of time). Costs for lodging are low due to the work input of the participants that are set off. The relationship of direct personnel and material costs is appropriate.⁶³ The expert community is also interested in the project as it is a valuable possibility to use it as a component in other projects.⁶⁴

However no project can be perfect at the first try. The project manager of ‘Between Ages’ therefore has reflected his ideas and their implementation profoundly and has initiated some suggestions for further thinking⁶⁵:

- One-on-One Aftercare
- More specifical adjustment of the educational units concerning the particular target group (bearing in mind that e.g. drug consumers would not have been affected at all)
- Integration of pilgrimage in professional measurements and for orientation
- Design of individual assistance of transition (depends on the order)
- Concluding the most successful aspect of ‘Between Ages’ is the preventive characteristic of the project that can be multiplied in many fields of practice and is efficient.⁶⁶ The project’s significant elements are the extraordinary successful combination of community service work, social training course and experiential pedagogical measure that are pedagogically effective.⁶⁷
- The expectation of developing an independent method including a new approach and an innovative combination of aspects has been met. All of the parties involved regard the efficacy of the project as proven.⁶⁸

⁶²Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 15f.

⁶³Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 16.

⁶⁴Teichert a.o. (2015): Ergebnisbericht, p. 24.

⁶⁵Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.27.

⁶⁶Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.26.

⁶⁷Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.23.

⁶⁸Sächsische Jugendstiftung (2016): Zwischen den Zeiten, p.23,25.

Also available in this project

<http://www.betweenages-project.eu/results.html>

Youth in Stress – Prerequisites for European projects in regard to socio-pedagogical walking	Output 1 English
Jugend im Stress – Voraussetzungen für europäische Projekte zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern	Output 1 German
Pilgrimage as starting point in a process of encountering, discovering and perceiving oneself	Output 2 English
Pilgern als Einstieg in einen Prozess der Selbstbegegnung, Selbstfindung und Wahrnehmung von Selbstwirksamkeit	Output 2 German
Socio-pedagogical Walking as an European Alternative in the Work with Young People in NEET and young Offenders. A theoretical perspective	Output 3 English
Sozialpädagogisches Pilgern als Europäische Alternative in der Arbeit mit benachteiligten und straffälligen jungen Menschen – eine theoretische Einordnung	Output 3 German
Walking to break with the past – the 3 month way from Belgium	Output 7a English
Walking to break with the past: the French way	Output 7b English
Walking to the future – Concept of the first developed way in Belgium	Output 7c English
Five days between imprisonment and Santiago de Compostela Social educational pilgrimage in Saxony	Output 8 English
Fünf Tage zwischen Haft und Santiago de Compostella Sozialpädagogisches Pilgern in Sachsen	Output 8 German
Report on the results of walking with NEET's and offenders	Output 9 English
Ergebnisbericht zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern mit Menschen in schwierigen Lebenslagen	Output 9 German
Requirements for the route - Handbook for socio-pedagogical walking tours with delinquent and disadvantaged youths	Output 10 English
Voraussetzungen für den Weg - Handbuch zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern mit straffälligen und benachteiligten Jugendlichen	Output 10 German
In die Zukunft gehen – ein Projekt für Straffällige und Menschen in schwierigen Lebenslagen (Videodokumentation)	Output 11 (Film) Dutch/French/German/ Italian/English
Strategy for re-engagement of young offenders and NEET	Output 12 English
Sozialpädagogisches Pilgern als ein neues Instrument für die Arbeit bin benachteiligten und straffälligen jungen Menschen Anregungen für Politik und Gesellschaft	Output 13 German
White paper to force walking as an instrument to work with NEET's and Offenders in Europe	Output 13 English

Selected texts are also available in French, Dutch and Italian

Project aim is the development of alternative methods and measures to imprisonment of young offenders and increase the chances of NEETs for social inclusion. *Between ages* evolves strategies towards juvenile crime prevention via the implementation of a platform for policies and practices. The network combats social exclusion, prevents recurrence and early school leaving, promotes social security in community and contains crimes related to petty crime, promotes commitment and empowerment of young people and positive initiatives into adulthood, and enforces last but not least public spending with regard to health issues, welfare and judicial affairs. The overall objective is hence to promote the Europe2020 strategy in the field of youth and the creation of a European association for coordinating pilgrimage activities for young offenders and NEET.

Seit 2011 wird in Sachsen das Pilgern als moderne Methode der sozialpädagogischen Arbeit erprobt und entwickelt. Als spezielle Form des „Sozialen Trainingskurses“ werden Maßnahmen erarbeitet, bei denen Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene in schwierigen Lebenssituationen die übliche Beratungs- und Trainingsumgebung verlassen und sich auf einen längeren Fußmarsch begeben. Diese begleiteten Wege dienen der Reflexion und Selbstwirksamkeitserfahrung und werden mit Arbeitseinsätzen und methodengeleiteten Reflexionen flankiert. So wird den Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen außerhalb ihres gewohnten Lebensumfeldes die Chance zu einer Neuorientierung und einem Neuanfang gegeben. Allgemeines Ziel des Vorhabens ist die (Weiter-) Entwicklung, der Transfer und die Umsetzung von innovativen und bewährten Verfahren im Bereich Jugend bzw. Jugendstrafrecht und NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Im Rahmen des Projektes „BA-Network“ wurde die Forschung zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern auf europäische Dimension ausgedehnt und Daten aus der langjährigen Erfahrung von Oikoten (Belgien) und Alba (Frankreich) einbezogen. Seit mehr als 20 Jahren führen diese zwei Partner Pilgerprojekte mit straffälligen Jugendlichen durch, die bis zu drei Monate unterwegs sind und mehr als 2000 Kilometer zurücklegen. Aus Italien sind zwei Partner dem Projekt beigetreten: zum einen unterstützt das Justizministerium Italiens bzw. die Abteilung für Jugendjustiz (DGM) die Partner dabei, die anvisierten Ziele zu erreichen und insbesondere den Zugang zu den europäischen Institutionen zu öffnen. Zum anderen wirkt die non-profit Organisation „L'Oasi Società Cooperativa Sociale“ und „Associazione Lunghi Cammini“ mit, um das Pilgern für junge Menschen zu testen und in Italien einzuführen.

Programme: Erasmus+ Identifier: 2015-2-DE04-KA205-012982

Between Ages: Network for young offenders and NEET



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