

# Protocol on “Experience expertise and job coaching of young people with disabilities (YPWD)” (Co-Production Protocol)

Final Version of 14 September 2022

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## **Introduction**

One of the core actions in the [Jump to Job project](#) is that end-users – concretely young people with a disability or health problem in their transition from school to work – are actively engaged in further developing and adapting the Jump to Job training programme and Curriculum for Peer Mentors and Job Coaches. More and more end-users are involved in a systematic manner by service providers in VET or job mediation to get familiar with and then to take up the role as peer mentor/supporter.

An important innovation in the Jump to Job project is that the end-users of the support services are also engaged in creating the content of the training. The project partners fully embrace the motto: “Nothing about us, without us”. In practical terms they experimented how to most effectively involve at least 5 end-users in their new role as peer mentors in the process of co-creating the Jump to Job programme and Curriculum for Peer Mentors and Job Coaches.

As the Jump to Job project is built up by the PDCA (plan – do – check – act) design the project partners first designed a framework on what is experiential expertise and how it differs from professional knowledge. In rolling out the project, they discovered which competences are needed to become a Jump to Job peer mentor/supporter and what the added value is for end-users to be involved from the design to the implementation phase in the co-production as well as in the joint delivery of the training.

In order to be able to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of this key feature of the project, GTB elaborated a questionnaire on how the 4 partners have been dealing throughout the project with the theme on experience knowledge and the role of experiential experts/experts by experiences. Based on the responses of the partners and on long-standing own experiences and knowledge, GTB has formulated a list of ingredients and pre-conditions needed to successfully realise the design and implementation of a user-driven quality service.

The project partners believe that these ingredients are generic for all vocational education and training (VET) and job mediation services. They thus hope that this project deliverable on co-production can contribute to make support services for young people with disabilities systematically more user-driven. It could also be instrumental to underpin processes of a cultural change in enterprises and organisations supportive of a transition to inclusive enterprises and organisations (see also [Change For Inclusion project](#)).

## 1. What is experiential expertise?

Experiential expertise (or also referred to as “experience expertise” below) is the use of experiential knowledge by people who themselves live and work with a disability situation.

The following elements are therefore important:

1. Experiential knowledge is different from, but not opposed to, professional knowledge. We will have to use both type of knowledge to set up and organise an effective coaching process which aims at valuating and taking into account lived experience.
2. This experiential knowledge is formulated and shaped by the experiential experts themselves. It is thus a specific form of expertise.

Experience expertise is built up in a three-stage system:

- It starts from exclusive handicap experiences. The experiences are exclusive because only people with disabilities have these experiences. People without disabilities can form an idea about what is happening, but they can never experience it directly themselves and incorporate it.
- A second step is the broadening of those individual experiences with the aim to take into account other personal experiences. Highly individual experiences are exchanged, “aggregated” in view of similar points and defined more generally. There are forms of recognition that give experiences a meaning that is linked to groups in which people with disabilities exchange those experiences. Experience expertise is thus more than telling the own testimony on having a disability. It’s creating story telling built up from your expertise so that your audience start to reflect and maybe take action. For example, a wheelchair user can make a testimony that his or her living environment isn’t accessible but if he/she would like to influence politicians to take actions on accessibility there is a need on figures about how many people are confronted with these problems, what actions must be taken first ... .
- In the third stage, experiential knowledge is linked to the context and the outside world. The Jump to Job Project is an important step to realise this stage. The person with experiential knowledge becomes an “experience worker” working and acting in duo with the professional worker. We discovered that this outside world differs and that three roles can be identified:
  - Peer-to-peer support: The peer mentor/supporter who sets up – in collaboration with a professional – individual coaching actions to another peer.
  - Involving peer mentors in group activities: The peer mentor/supporter who sets up – in collaboration with a professional – group empowerment actions for other peers.
  - Experience experts who give advice to service providers on specific themes or products or to employers – in collaboration with a professional.

Not everyone can – without any preparation, support and “framing” – play a qualitative role in this experiential expertise. Therefore, it is necessary to properly train and coach experience workers, having in mind the specific focus of the peer supporter/expert and the added value they can provide. A task to be tackled linked to this is therefore the development of profiles of competences and of training concepts for the experience experts. We could observe in the course of the project that the Jump to Job training is an essential building block for such trainings for peer mentors/supports. It is, however, also an appropriate tool to find out how candidates in peer support/advise are dealing with their own experience, how they create hope, design and realise life plans, are authentic and can be and feel empowered, recognised in their capacities, respected, etc.

## 2. Competence profile for the experience users

The Jump to Job project partners found out that there are 3 types on peer support. With its focus on group training and on advice, the project partners could identify the following competence profiles for the training programme and/or **modules**:

**For the group** peer support workers (i.e., the categories 1 and 2 above), the project partners did identify and could confirm the following **tasks**:

- to support people in their personal recovery (after an illness or accident, after having acquired a handicap or impairment) and in the identification and realisation of their projects and dreams
- to help people engage in activities that are meaningful to them
- to help people develop coping and problem-solving skills
- to collaboratively discuss care and support options
- to contribute to co-production of individual care and recovery plans
- to facilitate access to care and sources of support to (re-)enter VET programmes, the labour market or preparatory programmes to enhance the employability
- to support transitions into care
- to gain greater confidence and self-esteem
- to increase their feeling of empowerment on their own recovery journey
- to develop a more positive sense of identity and belonging
- to feel more valued
- to feel less stigmatised
- to gain more (life; employment-related) skills

For the **expert advisor as co-producer on a training** (i.e., the category 3 above) the project partners discovered **in addition to the tasks set out above** for the peer supporter the **four tasks** listed below:

- She/he promotes putting the client's story at the centre of the organisation and implementation of individualised support services and/or support networks
- She/he recognises when interventions or working methods hinder recovery and enters into a discussion about this with her/his job coach
- She/he stands up to stigmatisation
- She/he coaches and trains peers in handling the training elaborated in the context of the Jump to Job project

The project partners advise that service providers on VET and job mediation services build up a comprehensive portfolio on competences, how to assess them and provide the training to arrive there.

A competency is an “integrated whole” of knowledge, insight, skills, attitudes and personal properties with which adequate results can be achieved in a VET and/or professional context.

In addition to the tasks the project partners, led and coordinated by GTB, could identify in the framework of the Jump to Job project, they also managed to come up with sets of generic competences for the three roles set above under section 1, i.e., the peer supporter who sets up individual coaching actions to another peer, the peer supporter who sets up empowerment actions to other peers and an experience experts who gives advice to service providers on specific themes or products.

The following lists present the generic competences for peer group supporters and experience experts in the co-production of job training activities, competences for peers involved in delivering the Jump to Job training and competences for experience experts in advising the elaboration of job training activities:

**2.1. Generic competences for peer group supporters and experience experts in the co-production of job training activities**

- - non-medical language
- - non-judgmental listening
- - understanding and trusting recovery
- - reflection and introspection
- - have good communication skills in individual contacts and with groups
- - being able to use one's own experiences in an empowering way
- - methodical action
- - having the capacity and will to collaborate
- - having self-management and self-handling capacities

**2.2. Competences for peers involved in delivering the Jump to Job training**

They

- - support the group in equality together with the professional and set an example for such an approach through their own behaviour and commitment
- - help to create a safe group climate by using various techniques presented, tested and identified as successful Jump to Job techniques
- - facilitate the group process and creates a safe and supportive space for diversity
- - promote empowerment of participants and contribute their experiential knowledge to this end by monitoring the focus of the training on strength, capacities, capabilities and recovery
- - leave the responsibility with the participants but intervene if this is considered by both as desirable
- - pay attention to communication breakdowns in the group and/or between young people with disabilities receiving the training and job coaches

**2.3. Competences for experience experts in advising the elaboration of job training activities**

They

- - coach and train professional training developers based on experiential expertise on recovery support work and empowerment
- - have an eye on the process of change and the effects of the training for the client
- - have an eye for the dilemmas and areas of tension in the range of services and
- - are also able and confident to critically reflect on these and express them in the group.

**3. Ingredients needed for service providers on VET and/or job mediation services (and professionals) to build up a strategy on peer support**

Based on the experiences made in the context of the Jump to Job project, the project partners are able to formulate the ingredients listed below for service and training providers to realise the effective integration of experience knowledge into VET and/or job mediation services:

There is a need to

- have a clear vision/mission from the leaders/(top) management of the organisation
- build up a clear competence set for the experience workers
- make an assessment on these competences for peer supporters/mentors
- provide training to experience workers to develop their skills
- monitor the results generated by the use of experience knowledge and the involvement of experience workers
- communicate good practises (but also failures, problems, etc.)
- provide paid jobs and decent contractual arrangements for expert users

Based on the questionnaire filled in by the project partners from Greece, Slovenia and Spain and building on the knowledge and experience of the Belgian project partner GTB, the project partners have concluded that a lot of work has to be done to implement these ingredients in their own and similar organisations and in the daily work, processes and routines of them (and similar service providers). The Jump to job project, however, has made it clear that it's worth to invest in the training of peer mentors/supporters and to build up structures, together with the professionals, to make most of the knowledge and experience of trained experience experts. The Jump to Job training programme, based on FROG methodology, has helped our future candidates to become peer support workers and

- to gain greater confidence and self-esteem
- to increase their feeling of empowerment on their own recovery journey
- to develop a more positive sense of identity and belonging
- to feel more valued
- to feel less stigmatised
- to gain more life or employment-related) skills

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the Jump to Job project the project partners realised that peer support and experience knowledge in the co-production of the training is essential if the motto "Noting about us, without us" is taken seriously. They agreed that experience knowledge is not opposite to professional or scientific knowledge but that the combination of these three sources is necessary to realise empowerment for people with a disability. They believe that the Jump to Job training needs to be part of the training to become a peer supporter and/or experience knowledge advisor on trainings. For them it is effective in the support of users to become more active in the self-steering of their professional careers, too.

The seven project partners from five countries would like to advise service providers on VET and/or job mediation to make concrete action plans to implement the ingredients introduced in this paper. EPR's role as an EU-level network of social services providers has to create awareness on these insights and has an important role to promote practice-based good pathways. The Jump to Job project partners have shared their knowledge and are open to deal them in mutual learning sessions and activities.