

FINDINGS

The previously explained exercises and training units have been tested in five different countries in Europe during six months (October 2016-March 2017), within expert organizations working with people living with severe and prolonged mental illness. Here you have a short explanation of each of the national target groups, so you can compare it with the group/s you are working with and get an idea about the potential results that you can get when implementing the Chic & Craft training course.

As the project has been implemented in five different countries, with different target groups, different ages, environments (rural-urban areas) and contexts, it is important to keep in mind that taste varies. Even, within the same working group you can find different tastes, which has a big impact in the motivation and thus in the success of the implementation of the units. Therefore, please consider this point when implementing the Chic & Craft course and adapt it accordingly.



Fundación INTRAS (Spain)



The Chic & Craft training course has been implemented within a day centre in the small village of Toro (province of Zamora), a rural area farming focused. Our target group is composed by people with severe and prolonged mental illness, mainly schizophrenia, and aged between 40-65 years old. Their motoric skills are mostly quite damaged due to their illness and they tend to have low self-esteem, high demotivation and lack of goals in life.

Chic & Craft course was offered to the people attending to this day centre (around 60 people) and finally **eight** people interested in it attended regularly to the training. When launching the project, we identified several challenges that we had to face in order to get good results: the need to accustom the participants (mostly very individualistic), to work as a team, the need

X-----X

to promote perseverance, the acquisition of routines or fostering the sense of responsibility, amongst others.

The timetable of the course was very well-defined and with clear objectives, a completely different working style from what most of the participants was accustomed to.

We worked the leadership abilities especially with the two peer mentors selected, whose work we would like to recognize and appreciate. These women were chosen after observing their positive predisposition in the workshop and this experience has contributed to improve and strengthen their recovery process.

---X

The Chic & Craft project has left several benefits and positive experiences in the INTRAS Day Centre in Toro, including:

- Increase in the **confidence** in the self-capacities of each of the participants, who saw how they were able to carry out all the suggested upcycled products thanks to their work and perseverance.
- The **cohesion** and the feeling of belonging to a group (in this case the Chic & Craft workshop) were also strengthened.
- Reinforcement of **creativity**, plastic skills, aesthetic sense and **manual and manipulative skills**.

All these benefits can be applied, not only to acquire the technical knowledge related to the teaching course, but also to the daily life of the participants; thus the benefit is evident!

The Chic & Craft project has left the participants with the sensation that they have worked hard and intensively during a short period of time and in a variety of products broad enough to have stimulated their creativity and their interest in continuing training week after week.

They also explored the concept of recycling and its thousands of potential uses in other workshops delivered in the same centre. They worked on the importance of teamwork as well as in their perception about the European Union and its use in the daily life of their citizens. In that sense, the participants highlighted the importance of implementing the project alongside other European partners, being in direct contact with them. The visit of the partners to the Day Centre in Toro in September 2016 broke out the routine and aroused everyone's curiosity.



For the staff working in the Day Centre, the Chic & Craft project provided them with new products that will continue developing and improving in the future. These products will be sold in the pop-up shop opened in the main street of the village of Toro. From the point of view of these professionals, the Chic & Craft training course has improved the ability to work in a team and to go deeper in an interesting methodology: the peer learning.

The two peer mentors we talked about previously which have been trained thanks to this course will continue playing their role during the upcycled fashion workshop that is going to be established as a permanent training course as a result of the Chic & Craft project.



During the project, we had to face difficult situations, most of them inherent to the condition of the people with severe and prolonged mental illness. We overcame most of these obstacles and the team was reinforced after the experience, but we must recognize that some were an irreparable loss: two of the participants in the Chic & Craft course, Blanca and Cristina, passed away. We would like these lines to serve as a tribute and recognition to their inestimable work. Blanca, Cristina and their families will be forever in our memories.





OZARA d.o.o. (Slovenia)



The Chic&Craft training course has been implemented within our organization in one of the regular programs named “social inclusion program”. This program is mainly aimed at support and maintenance of working abilities of persons with disabilities. Our target group is composed of persons who either have been officially designated as being unemployable (official status from Employment Service of Slovenia), persons with disabilities having status within the framework of category I as granted by the provision of the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute without any rights to an invalidity pension, according to the law defining pension and invalidity insurance and persons with mental and physical disabilities who have no other opportunity for inclusion by social security services. The age of included persons differs, but is mainly between 30 and 60 years of age.

Because our program has a very important part on the quality of life of unemployable people, every opportunity for obtaining new skills and knowledge to a more independent life, positive self-image and self-respect is vital.





The Chic & Craft was offered to our participants with a wish to experience a new creative process with possibility to exchange and work with their peers and as **peer mentors**. We invited quite a lot of users to an introduction session within the piloting to see what all this is about. While awakening the curiosity, we decided for the piloting to be an open opportunity and space to freely enter and leave the group upon either personal preferences or other obligations. Around **ten-thirteen** participants approximately attended the sessions within the six months of pilot experience. The main challenge was to organize the proposed activities within other regular ones so we decided even before the start, that the group should be open by all means at all time, not leaving anybody outside of a great opportunity to take part in this co-creative process. The general findings and conclusion after the piloting were generally very positive. The major and most important feedback we got throughout the piloting was directly after each session from our participants (**enthusiasm, coping with problems in production of some items, level of help needed, assistance, motivation, peer support**). By this means the impact of the project on us as organization and our participants therefore sometimes cannot be measurable just with numbers, facts and statistic – it left us something to remember, something that felt good and the feeling that we achieved something in a creative and co-constructive process.





CJD (Germany)



The Chic & Craft training course has been implemented within young people who are attending a vocational training course for housekeeping at a CJD facility. Initially it was carried out at the CJD Bonn-Castel, where the vocational training course is embedded in a conference centre and guest house, the last few months of the project the implementation took place at the CJD-BBW Frechen, a vocational training centre.

The participants of the target group of the vocational training for housekeeping are young people with learning disabilities, physical handicaps and / or sensory impairment.



Over the course of the project, around 20 young students from different classes of the vocational training were participating in the project. The German dual education system made it sometimes difficult to involve the students, as it has a rather strict curriculum, which means that examination times needed to be considered, students had to do an internship at another duty station, etc. Due to that, and also because the project was carried out over a timeframe of two years of educational training, students from different classes were following the project during its cycle. At the beginning of the project the first ideas were developed with one group of students: suggestions for upcycled products, evaluating their needs, etc. But the piloting of the upcycled fashion units and the exercises to promote peer





learning were tested with another group, thus the students who made suggestions about how to upcycle products were not involved in the piloting process and did not have the chance to see and enjoy the final upcycled products.

Doing the Chic & Craft course one has to keep in mind that taste of fashion is different between different classes as well as all over Europe, which influenced the eagerness to participate in specific sessions.

The project brought some special moments and benefits to the group as well as the individuals:

- ✓ The **happiness** in the youngster's eyes when they successfully created something new.
- ✓ A trigger to make use of their own **creativity** and the interest in continuing to do some handicrafts.
- ✓ **Understanding of diversity**: being *different* is not negative, everyone and everything is *unique*.
- ✓ **Being part of a group** and developing the confidence to reflect with their mentors the sessions and experience.





IASIS NGO (Greece)



In IASIS, pilot sessions started in day centre for MHU in the city centre of Athens. Target group were the day centre registered users, all of them with serious or more **serious mental health issues** (schizophrenia, bipolar syndrome), most of them also with **severe social problems** (poverty, abandoned from their families/ less strong network). Their age range was from 30 to 55, and it was an equal participation between men and women, with a slight precedency to women. IASIS main trainers were assisted by European Voluntary Service volunteers, who found the project very interesting and wanted to participate also.

Fifteen beneficiaries attended the sessions, being the average number of participation between eight and fifteen people per session.

Chic & Craft workshop began by explaining the safety rules for the use of the materials that we will use during the workshop, as well as, general rules, that there must be cooperation and communication with all participants, also that they all have to be precise at schedule.

The participants in the sessions and workshop program acquire knowledge and experience to experiment with different materials and techniques such as **knitting, sewing, and crafts** with different materials. Everyone tries to find the appropriate tools that fit to him/her more. The **team collaboration** is visible, show great interest and dedication to the program. Each participant has of course its own time in which responding. Some of them can assimilate the techniques quickly and some others need additional sessions to complete the tasks. So the group tries to adapt their needs. Improvisation and progress become slowly but steadily.

Sometimes the level of commitment was not that significant high. But this can happen to everyone, so, nothing to worry about: we all have our “bad days”!

Peer techniques seemed to be the most difficult to implement. Most probably their general psycho – social conditions doesn’t allow them to feel capable in order to play the mentor/peer role. With several motivational exercises and continuous support from facilitators, they manage to follow some of them and understand the benefits of peer learning.





IASIS team encouraged them to write down a word about their feelings after the session. Here are some positive words we collect: Great, soul's power, nature, fantastic, beauty, love (!)

The interest of the participants in the Chic & Craft workshop remained till the end at high level, as they all were full of enthusiasm and willingness to receive information and further implementation.

Some tips for C&C methodology trainers:

- ✓ Use as many **creative ideas** you can (i.e. different materials but also colours and textures).
- ✓ **Promote them!** Every product is a unique piece of art, and it is important for them to realize it.
- ✓ **Don't lose your hopes and your faith!** Maybe today they didn't make it, but they will do it tomorrow!
- ✓ Try to **take care of each of the participants** individually.
- ✓ On the other hand, promote as much as you can the **small peer groups**, in order to show them the benefits of teamwork.
- ✓ Let them **laugh**, create the conditions of **joy and happiness** in your group, use icebreakers and have fun with your team!





Valakupių reabilitacijos centras (Lithuania)



Our group was composed by four and seven participants, aged from 36 to 53 years old. They all had mental illness but most of them not very severe, excepting some with depression. They had good motoric skills and were able to understand the tasks very well.

During the first session we got acquainted, established rules (respect, confidentiality, not speaking when you do not want, leave the project as you want, etc.). Then, an introduction to different personality types was made and the participants had a great opportunity to see how different we are and find out why.

Some of the tasks were slightly modified to adapt them to the mood of the group; each working group is different and it is very important to be flexible and offer the participants what they need in every single moment.

We tried emotional freedom technique, promoting physical contact with the participants, and we have to say that they liked it! We touched very softly with our fingertips some parts of the face and the body, being very helpful to relax and decreases pain (also physical!).

We also included some Socrates questions and 14 “Sleight of Mouth” patterns (a system that, once mastered, can allow you to have always a response that will effectively elucidate your position and help you to persuade rather than be persuaded) in order to help the participants to clash their limiting beliefs and values. The trainees liked them and we recommended some useful books to read about it.





If you are going to replicate the Chic & Craft training course, we recommend you to plan the order of the training session, starting from the easier ones. The ideal size of the working group goes from **eight to fifteen participants**, if they are mentally stablished and motivated.

At the beginning of the course, the trainer does not know about the participants' abilities, so it is better to start with a simple one, for instance, the scarf made from a T-shirt and then promote the **engagement and motivation**. The staff will then know who work fast, who work more slowly, who requires further explanation or practice show.

Some of the products made can require more practice time, as for instance the cap made from old sweaters. The participants need to know very well how to work with the sewing machine before they are able to sew following a circle. It is important that the time schedule is adapted to the slowest participant to **avoid frustration** and enjoy the work done. If the participant does not want to perform any task, then offer another different one, it is important to be **flexible and creative**.

People with mental disabilities use to prefer options straightforward tasks that require quite a lot of time and whose final result gives satisfaction and joy to the participants. Units like the foulard, the leather brooch, the customized pull over or the t-shirt made of scarves can be a good example of easy to do products that encourage the participants and provide them with positive feelings.

