



Empowerment workshop: An Introduction

Why am I going to learn about Empowerment and why is it important?

Empowerment is a new understanding and way of working in social service. That means that working *with* and not *for* service users addresses everyone who works in social service provision, not only because it helps us in our endeavours to provide better, more targeted social services, but also because it brings us closer to a more inclusive society.

Empowerment also means a shift in relation to whose knowledge is valued when social service is carried out. Until the 1970s/1980s, the positivist research paradigm went almost unchallenged. In the last decades more, experimental knowledge and the knowledge from end users have become more legitimated and valued – both in the academic discourse and in-service design and delivery. With reference to The Empowerment Handbook the importance of the shift can be described: “The knowledge and experience of service users and their organisations are likely to have a helpful role to play in supporting better integrated and coordinated practice in human services” (Beresford, 2017;68)

The humanistic view on human nature.

Empowerment is based on a humanistic view which entails:

- A believe in and a respect for the individual.
- A believe in that everybody can name his or her reality.
- A believe in that everybody has authority and competences to make a change in life.

What is the workshop about?

The workshop will entail reflections on how you can work with empowerment on different levels: an individual and a group level, an organisational level and a societal level. The aim of the workshop is to support service providers, both public, private or third sector actors who would like to find new ways of working with and empowering end users and develop new or improve existing social services with an active involvement of the end users.

The content of the workshop.

An introduction to empowerment and the humanistic view on human nature.

Describe and share with the group an example or a problem from your own daily practice which you want to improve or work with in a new and different way.



The group reflects on obstacles and possibilities for a more empowering effort in social service. The reflections can be on all three levels and at the same time refer to the end user group, the professional role and the structure of the organisation. The group reflects on and discuss different ideas and tools that could be useful for planning and carrying out the social service in a new and different way which includes the end users experience. The different thoughts and ideas are carried out in practice and will be presented for the group on the next workshop.

The SEMPRE resources [Empowerment Handbook](#) and [Co-creating Social Services](#) can be used as inspiration for working with different methods increasing empowerment and user involvement in social service.

A concrete example.

An example from the publication “Co-creating Social Services – A compilation of Micro Projects (Micro Projects Brochure)” describes how people with disabilities created a meeting place in Grobina, Latvia.

Grobina is a rural municipality that has only few inhabitants but covers a large area. People with disabilities who live here often have no access to day centres and other services that are only available in the city. Considering large distances and limited accessibility it is difficult for them to meet, especially in the long winters.

The solution of this need for meeting with others became a meeting garden: people with disabilities created a place to meet and spend time together – for themselves and other people.

The microproject used the following empowerment tools in....

- The needs assessment phase: Future workshop
- The service design phase: Exodus method and action learning
- The support phase: Action learning training

Find your own suitable examples from the Empowerment Handbook, from the Micro Project Brochure. Let you inspire from the evaluation and examples and experiences from the pilots

Did we get the answers we needed? Learning benefit

Evaluate your workshop using the evaluation described in the Guidebook for Empowerment Training or the evaluation most meaningful in your context.