

VerA

An initiative against school drop-out

Mission

VerA¹ is an initiative of Senior Experten Service (SES)² aimed at students, especially of vocational schools, to prevent them from leaving studies and, in general, aimed at anyone who wants to return to the world of work.

The VerA requirements originate from situations such as:

- breaking of training contracts,
- qualifications not compatible with the needs of companies,
- scarce company training initiatives,
- not knowledge of the world of work,
- immaturity and unrealistic expectations,
- Poor assistance from families or schools.

Partners and funding

The project partners are: the Associations of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce; the German Confederation of Chambers of Skilled Crafts and the German Confederation of Liberal Professions.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the aforementioned Associations are the main fund providers.

Activity

VerA is a national mentoring program that helps potential workers complete their training and prepare them to work life. The peculiar characteristic of VerA is that every user gets the support by a personal mentor; the user and the mentor jointly decide the duration, the form and the content of the support.

The typical commitment is 2 to 4 hours per week.

Young people and their needs

VerA supports apprentices and people who want to improve or complete their professional preparation or need a socio-behavioral help. Most of the requests are related to training on: specific subjects (around 43.5%), behavior or resolution of conflicts or personal problems (24.3%) and knowledge of German language (8.7%).

The 40% of the applicants are women.

Accessing VerA

Support can be requested via VerA website, by email or telephone. VerA is present with its own stands in fairs, and organize presentations in professional schools.

The contract between the applicant and the expert is carried out by the Chamber of Commerce, which is also the validating Body of the expert - applicant assignment.

Experts and their training

The SES volunteer experts involved in the VerA project are about 2500, whose 17% are women; they are retired workers who want to make their professional skills available. The training consists of a two-day seminar and of regular SES meetings to share experiences.

For each award the expert receives a contribution of € 50 per month.

1 **Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbrüchen**", i.e. prevention of training breakups.

2 See paragraph above

The management of VerA

VerA is managed in Bonn by about 30 people, including 12 volunteers Senior Expert; moreover, there are 82 coordinators (volunteers) working in the German territory.

VerA has an annual contribution of € 400 for each assignment.

Results

From 2009 to today, there have been over 10,000 requests for mentoring. In particular, in 2017 there have been 3970 assignments, of which 1795 were continuations of the previous year.

The system is effective, in fact over 80% of assignments reached their goal; it should also be underlined that the evaluation of the users of various aspects of training is very positive (full agreements around 78%).

Problems

Experts recruitment and how to bring out the needs of young people.

Applicability hypothesis

VerA has an annual budget of about 1.5 million € and a multi-year experience, its applicability needs an experimental phase which, however, has a cost of 800-1000 € per mentored person.

This project implementation must be based largely on volunteering but it should also rely on a structured organization, below the salient features of the project:

- territorial scope Turin and (province),
- one or more of Seniors Associations,
- one or more Associations operating in the social field
- Chamber of Crafts, Trade and Industrial Union,
- Organization in professional schools.

With a goal of assisting 100 people for six months, we can estimate a cost of 40,000 to 50,000 €.

References

Senior Experten Service (SES)

SES is a German Organization of experienced senior volunteers whose purpose is **sharing skills** and professionalism in Germany and abroad. In Germany, SES mainly operates with the VerA project. It has a pool of over 12,000 experts; the management activities are carried out by about 170 people, half volunteers and half salaried.

VerA site

<http://vera.ses-bonn.de/>

http://vera.ses-bonn.de/fileadmin/redaktion/downloadbereich/VerA_infoblatt_24.11.2017_english.pdf