THE EU COMMENIUS

LAB*learning*
project

A variety of LABlearning facilities

This paper aims to offer some inspiration as to the many ways to establish LABlearning facilities for (exclusion threatened) youth – in formal as well as in non-formal settings.
This mosaic should be expanded and qualified during the practice phases and constitute one of the key structures in the final outcomes.

The key objective of the LABlearning project is to deliver concrete and useful inspiration on laboratory and media based learning in formal and non-formal settings. The aim is to offer more interesting and relevant learning opportunities for youth at risk – and to young people in general.

Setting up such youth facilities in non-formal settings – in a youth club or a community centre for example – might be complicated, but less complicated than in formal settings.
In non-formal contexts it is very much a matter of decision and financing, whereas in formal settings we will be facing the entire system of formal education: class organization, curricula, tests, time control, teacher practices, institutional routines, etc., etc.

The project cannot change an educational institution or the institution's practice.
What the project can do is to establish different forms of laboratory experiments integrated in formal, semi-formal or non-formal settings.
Such laboratories might vary considerably as to local situations, resources – and the will to make decisions.

In phase 1 the LAB partners will discuss what options they have with the local stakeholders – teachers, managers, local administrations.
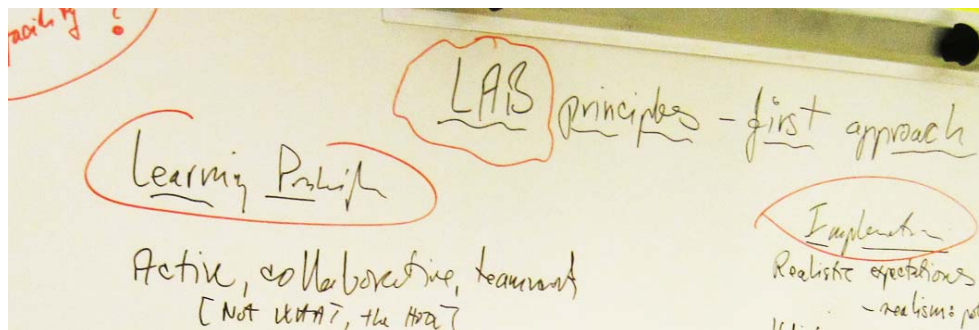In support of these local dialogues the project offers some first ideas on how to establish such laboratories or experiments – without challenging the entire educational routine.
The LABlearning settings must be realistic.

So, what kind of formal, semi-formal and non-formal settings are possible?
We offer below a few examples – most of the practical solutions will probably combine and mix these solutions. Or adapt them to local contexts.
We will list the options going from *formal to non-formal*.

1
A class as media laboratory
The school can decide that a class, for example a new class, will be organized partly or in full according to LABlearning didactics and principle for a shorter period or for a year.
How to do it?
[Description]

2
A curriculum as media laboratory
A certain subject for one or more classes or groups might be organized according to LABlearning didactics, for instance English, Information Technology, Communication or History.
How to do it?
[Description]

3
A cross-subject curriculum as media laboratory
It can be decided that a class or a group will use LABlearning didactics and principles to learn about a cross-subject theme, such as climate change, in a shorter or longer period.
How to do it?
[Description]

4
A class project as media laboratory
A class can work in a LABlearning setting on a special project within a curricula subject.
How to do it?
[Description]

5
A project group as media laboratory
A group of learners can work in a LABlearning setting on a special project within a curricula subject.
How to do it?
[Description]

6
A project group as media laboratory
Within a subject or within the curricula in general a special group of learners (perhaps at risk learners) are formed, and are challenged to work in LAB settings in parallel to the class.
How to do it?
[Description]

7
A support education media laboratory
Some institutions offer preparatory or support education for students who are not yet ready to enter a secondary or vocational study, and such support educations might be perfect for laboratory based learning.
How to do it?
[Description]

8
An international media laboratory
A class or a group of learners are challenged with working with a subject or a cross-subject theme by collaborating virtually with one or more schools in other countries. The project might include language learning and might be set up according to the LABlearning didactics.
How to do it?
[Description]

9
A semi-formal media laboratory within school hours
In support of at risk learners, or to get drop-outs back into learning, the institution can establish in-school media lab facilities and invite groups of learners to work in these facilities in parallel to class education.
How to do it?
[Description]

10
A semi-formal media laboratory in continuation of school hours
The institution might decide to open part of the building for after school media laboratories, especially for youth at risk. The activities in the media lab might be linked to the school work, but it does not have to be. Opening hours might be on

work days from after school to 8 or 9 in the evening. Some institutions might even consider opening hours during the weekend.
How to do it?
[Description]

11

A non-formal media laboratory in the institution after school

The institution might decide to establish a genuine media lab in its premises – for young people attending the school, and for other young people in the community. This facility might be open in the evening and also in the weekend. In extreme cases, an educational institution might decide to establish something like a Computer Clubhouse linked to but not controlled by the educational institution.
How to do it?
[Description]

12

A non-formal media laboratory in a community centre

One of the strongest non-formal solutions is to establish a media lab as an integrated part of a community centre – or the use a media lab for young people as a catalyst for establishing a community centre!
The media lab will profit from being directly linked to the community – and several synergies between the activities in such a centre can be expected.
How to do it?
[Description]

13

A non-formal media laboratory in a media education

A media education, such as a multimedia university, a media vocational college or a media based high school, might offer its premises to establish a media lab in support of the learning of youth at risk in the community.
In certain cases such an initiative might develop into a computer clubhouse facility.
How to do it?
[Description]

14

A non-formal media laboratory in a youth club facility

Many communities have some kind of youth facilities or youth clubs. Such facilities might partly or in full be developed into a LABlearning facility, closely linked to the community.
How to do it?
[Description]

15

A non-formal media laboratory in a private organisation

A strong private enterprise might offer to use its premises for establishing creative media laboratories for youth at risk and for young people in general. Often this will be private companies with strong corporate social responsibility programs – or companies directly interested in youth and media.
How to do it?
[Description]

16

A non-formal computer clubhouse

The high-end non-formal solution is, of course, to establish a genuine computer clubhouse in the community, supported by major stakeholders in the community. Such a solution requires long-term planning and preparation, but in the long run it represents a very strong and sustainable solution.
How to do it?
[Description]

The *How to do it* represents an anticipation of the project processes. The many project activities are precisely designed to produce answers to this question. Therefore we can expect to find the variety of settings in the final inspirational outcomes of the project.

The expected key topics in the final inspirational guides are: various settings, didactics, principles, age, youth at risk groups, the linking of formal and non-formal, etc.

There are very many ways of experimenting with LABlearning didactics – from a small group project to designing an entire school as a computer game!

One of the results of the LABlearning project should be to offer guidance on what works and what doesn't – at different levels, with different resources.

Please note that the size or scope of the facilities should have no consequences as to the quality of the technology, the activities or the mentoring in the facility! Both smaller and larger media lab projects and facilities should be based on the LABlearning principles to be developed in the first stages of the project, and further elaborated throughout the entire lifetime of the project.