

# SATIR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

*Satir Around the Globe*

## Human Value: The Socioeducative work in the Municipality of Castell-Platia d'Aro

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### THE CONTEXT

Castell-Platja d'Aro is a town located in the north east of Catalonia, on the Mediterranean shore, in the heart of the Costa Brava. Unbelievably, the coastal area had been considered Badlands since the lands were not suitable for farming. However since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially from the 60's these areas changed in a radical way. First, the elites and people economically well-established discovered the tourism of sun and beach and, secondly, because of the prosperity in post-war Western Europe, with an emerging middle class, holiday periods became popular and democratized tourism became a mass phenomenon.

In the 60's and 70's in Spain, under a dictatorship, the economy improved and for our village that meant boosting tourism services and increasing the construction of holiday housing.

However, the population of Castell-Platja d'Aro changed very fast, and without social harmony. There were about 1,300 individuals in the 60's, and the population increased to 4,000 in the 80's, and finally 10,500 inhabitants in present day. The population growth during the 60's, 70's and 80's came from people from the rest of Spain, especially from the south. They were trying to escape from situations of severe poverty and misery, sometimes without an educational background, speaking another language.

During the 90's and the early turn of the century newcomers were mostly from Northern and Central Africa and Eastern Europe. They were also escaping from poverty, again without any specific formation and speaking other languages, having different religions and with a diversity of skin colour. At the same time, we must add that, we also had very wealthy newcomers who drove expensive cars and ordered the building of ostentatious

and pretentious houses, some of which cost millions of euros. Some of these newcomers are part of our largest foreign community, which is the Russian one.

The vast majority of newcomers came to us hoping to improve their economic situation and to give a new and promising future to their families and descendants. We are a tourist destination and, therefore, our “factories” just produce one single “product,” happiness for hundreds of thousands of clients that visit us every year, especially in the summer. Unfortunately, that means that there are people in our town suffering from complicated situations, either economically, personally or socially, and those situations make them feel far from happy.

A lot of our citizens have grown up without being able to share life experiences with their neighbours during their childhood and their early youth. Several of our citizens have been in touch with neighbours for the first time at the workplace. So that makes them more vulnerable when they face adversity, because they lack social and family support.

Many young people do not find their place in the world easily in an environment that more often than not seems a display of vanity and opulence. They want to be a part of that glamorous lifestyle, but they cannot. Back to the 80’s, when the Catalans recovered their institutions and government, and the democratic local authorities assumed more capacity and competences to promote social policies independently from the state, they immediately saw that it was necessary to “sew” and strengthen our community. That is, to make it more cohesive, to enable the personal and social development of every individual, to encourage people of all ages, but especially young people, and especially youngsters from families with fewer possibilities, whose parents often survive with precarious seasonal jobs, with long working days that prevent them from giving enough educational support to their children.

In this article we want to introduce you to our social and community work whose main goal is to build a healthy community for all our citizens who are in the process of their personal and social development.

## **THE MODEL**

Around 1987, the municipal social services began. By the early 1990s, the town had started to create projects aimed at children and young people. It also opened a centre to meet the social and well-being needs of the elderly. In that decade, many projects were created which have continued to grow and develop over the years. Thanks to the support of the government team, the projects were adapted to meet the needs of the people and all of them were expanded.

Since the beginning, in Castell-Platja d’Aro, socio-educative work has been based on the following principles:

1. **THE PERSON:** Working with the PERSON as the main focus of intervention. The well-being of the person is the most important aspect. Human values are valued above all other interests. As Virginia Satir said: *“Each person is unique and can define him or herself from an inner source of strength and validation”* (Satir, V. *The Satir Model*, 1991, p. 14).

Each and every one of the programmes and projects cater to the person as a whole. We put emphasis on the strengths and not on deficits. We value a culture of treating people well in order to maintain and enhance self-esteem.

2. **CONTEXTS:** Working from the relational contexts allows us to create optimal conditions for people to have opportunities to change. We believe that the contexts must be nurturing, create environments in which social coexistence is more positive, and in which people feel happy to participate, feel listened to and feel that they are important, and of which they have a predominantly positive assessment.

*“Our behaviour reflects what we have learned. Learning is the basis of behaviour, we need to have new learning. To accomplish new learning, we need a motive, a purpose, a nurturing context and a trust in something from the outside to help us”* (Satir’s beliefs from her notes in Vila, Sophia: Virginia Satir’s, Theory of Family Therapy in [http://es.slideshare.net/fullscreen/S\\_vila/virginia-satirs.presentations](http://es.slideshare.net/fullscreen/S_vila/virginia-satirs.presentations), p. 7).

One of the examples that we could use to explain what we do is the following: The World’s Square is a place where people of all nationalities can meet together. This is a space that was created to welcome newcomers to the municipality, but it has become a meeting place where people interact with each other on a one-to-one basis and which increases the self-esteem of the participants.

3. **INCLUSION VERSUS EXCLUSION:** The services and projects are based on inclusion, being careful not to generate contexts that contribute to stigmatisation, but rather to normalisation, taking the wealth of diversity into account.

The two clearest examples are two projects that were created by the social services, firstly: The family spaces, a project which arose through social services but which caters to all families in the municipality who have small children and which is dedicated to empowering them parentally. It brings all types of families together, facilitating the exchange of skills, regardless of their problems, economic circumstances, etc. These relationships enrich everyone.

And secondly: The intervention with at-risk-teenagers which began with a project that only worked with young people who had disruptive and problematic behaviour. For different reasons, it was decided to alter the focus of the intervention and the social services educator made a change and worked within the high school, offering a place for emotional education, working individually, in families and with groups. This change meant that, with the inclusion of these people, the problems were reduced. The problems can be dealt with preventively and the program can care for other young people. Based on these principles, services, projects and programmes have been expanded and improved.

In 2007, there were numerous incidents of teenage antisocial behaviour, violence and crime after the closure of a project to help problematic teenagers. At that time, we asked if the Catalan Justice Department could collaborate with us and a team of advisors was set up. The result of this collaboration was the creation of the Commission for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and all professionals came together in a joint effort. The professionals concerned were the local police, Catalan Police, Social Services, youth Services, all the Schools and the professionals from the Justice Department.

It was at this time when we really started to function as an active and dynamic network, freely sharing information, observations and ideas with each other. This activated a dynamic process that went through various different phases, which generated our systems-based growth model. This new way of working opened our eyes to seeing the interventions, the projects, the problem or symptom in a wider context; to be able to connect what was

happening to the context in which it was occurring. This approach allowed better flexibility in creating new possibilities and perspectives in which to see and understand the problems. All the representatives within the commission introduced a wider and more horizontal vision of the organisation of services, and this has given us many more options than we would have had had we followed a linear model.

The circular and growth thinking and systems model (action-reaction-interaction) generates relevance, discovery, information, order and connectedness. Following Virginia Satir's Growth Model, the commission organised itself, taking into account the following values:

- Relationships are between equals in terms of value.
- Roles imply a function in a specific relationship at a particular time.
- Equality is manifested in: equality of persons, connection, interest and acceptance of sameness and differences.
- People feel love, ownership of self, respect for others, freedom of expression, and validation.

“Connect on the basis of being similar but grow on the basis of being different.”  
(Satir, Virginia: *The Satir model*, 1991, p. 17).

This climate of growth leads to a feeling of support among professionals. We have said that this way of working gives us:

- A thorough knowledge of the different services
- An educational perspective, to look at strengths rather than the lack of them
- A wider analysis of needs
- The optimisation of the resources available to the community
- Agility and adaptation
- Being more resolute
- Improving prevention and mediation strategies

In fact, after a few years of working together, we realised that the name of the committee no longer reflected the work that we were doing. The original name was The Commission for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, but the focus of our work had changed from incidents and problems to promoting coexistence. The Committee is now called The Commission for the Promotion of Peaceful Coexistence. We went from delinquency to coexistence and living together, which for us has been a very important change. The networking and projects that already existed were transformed and new projects arising from the new requirements were added. We placed emphasis on the following methodologies:

1. **PREVENTION:** The projects are tools for the prevention of certain behaviours. We think about programmes that work before the behaviour becomes more complicated. For example, we work together with Police, social services and the youth centre when a young person commits a petty crime. Mediation and damage repair activities are carried out, as well as tasks benefitting the community. Amongst other things, schools offer programmes that work on social skills, emotional education, and relationships. As a consequence the teachers are more connected with their students and can pick up on their emotions and help them in the expression of these.

2. **WORKING IN NETWORKS:** Professionals must take into account the totality and complexity of the situations. *In this way, the network formed by all the services develops a common concept that allows us to deal with different situations, defining future scenarios, strategies for action and collaboration processes.* One example of this can be seen in a project carried out this year. We have drafted a protocol for the prevention of bullying and the promotion of good behaviour. All the services have participated in the drafting and creation of this protocol and it will be launched in September, with activities involving schools, the civic centre, library, youth centres, police, social services, families, etc. In short, the whole community.
3. **GUIDANCE:** The relationship between professionals and clients becomes a very important tool to generate change, create relationships, attachment, trust etc. It's important that this support allows the expression of feelings. We have projects and programmes which allow us to create attachment with people and work with them authentically (being ourselves). The professional expresses a genuine interest, acceptance, and respect towards the person who they accompany throughout the process, regardless of what happens.
4. **SOCIAL COMMUNITY PEDAGOGY:** In order to improve the quality of life and well-being of people, it is necessary to promote social cohesion, working towards citizen participation, empowering individuals and the community. In this way, citizenship is built and shared responsibility and social awareness are promoted. For example, all the community development and citizen participation programmes which we will see in the following.

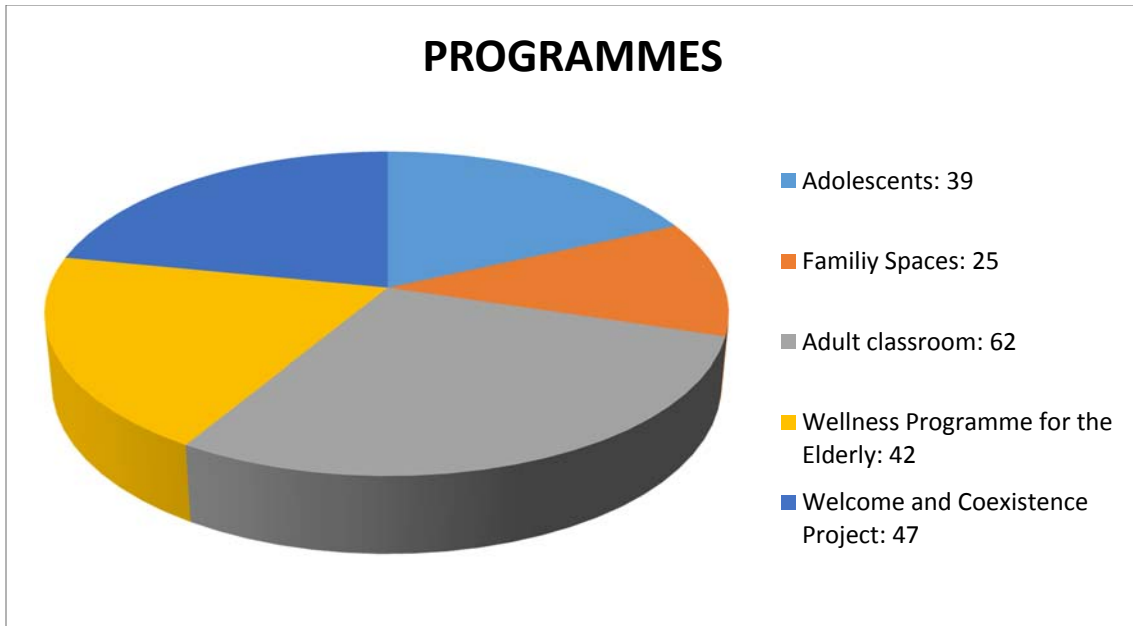
## RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Having worked with this model for some time as professionals from all areas (primary schools, secondary schools, social services, police, youth services, social centre, etc.), the Ramon Llull University from Barcelona and Castell-Platja d'Aro have completed some research, asking people if this model is positive and whether it has had an impact on the well-being of the community. We now wish to present the participatory research: "Human Value. The socio-educative work in the municipality of Castell-Platja d'Aro" in which we validate the relational attachment model.

To validate the relational model, we chose five programmes that have more than 15 years' experience of working on the model and we also want to study the operation of the commission. The programmes are:

### Graphic 1

- Family spaces: which work with families and early childhood issues
- Working with adolescents: young girls and boys of the municipality who are at risk
- Adult classroom: students of all ages and nationalities who have participated in this project over three years
- Wellness Programme for the Elderly
- Welcome and Coexistence Project
- The Commission for the Promotion of Coexistence.

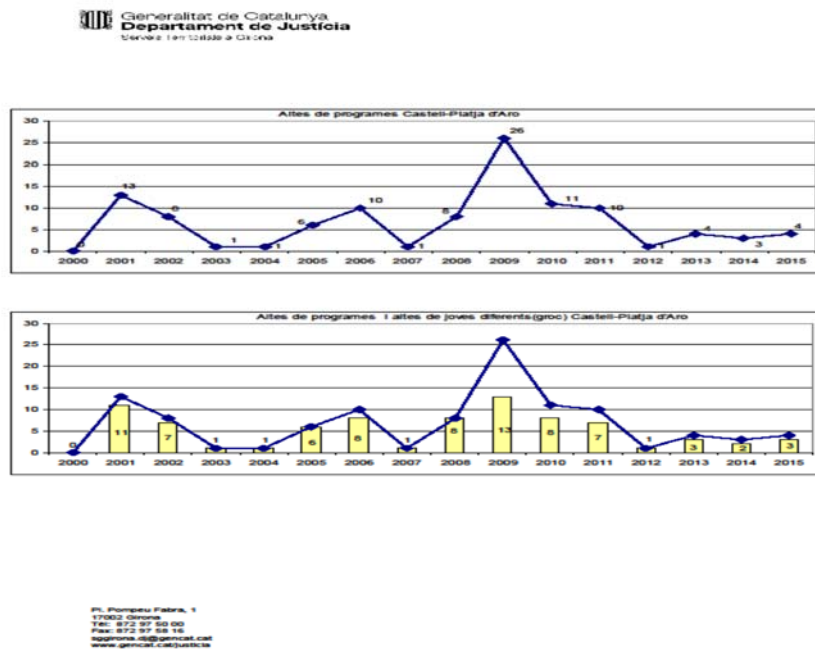


**Graphic 1** This is a little qualitative selection of these five programs

### Graphic 2

Incidents of Juvenile delinquency have been reduced

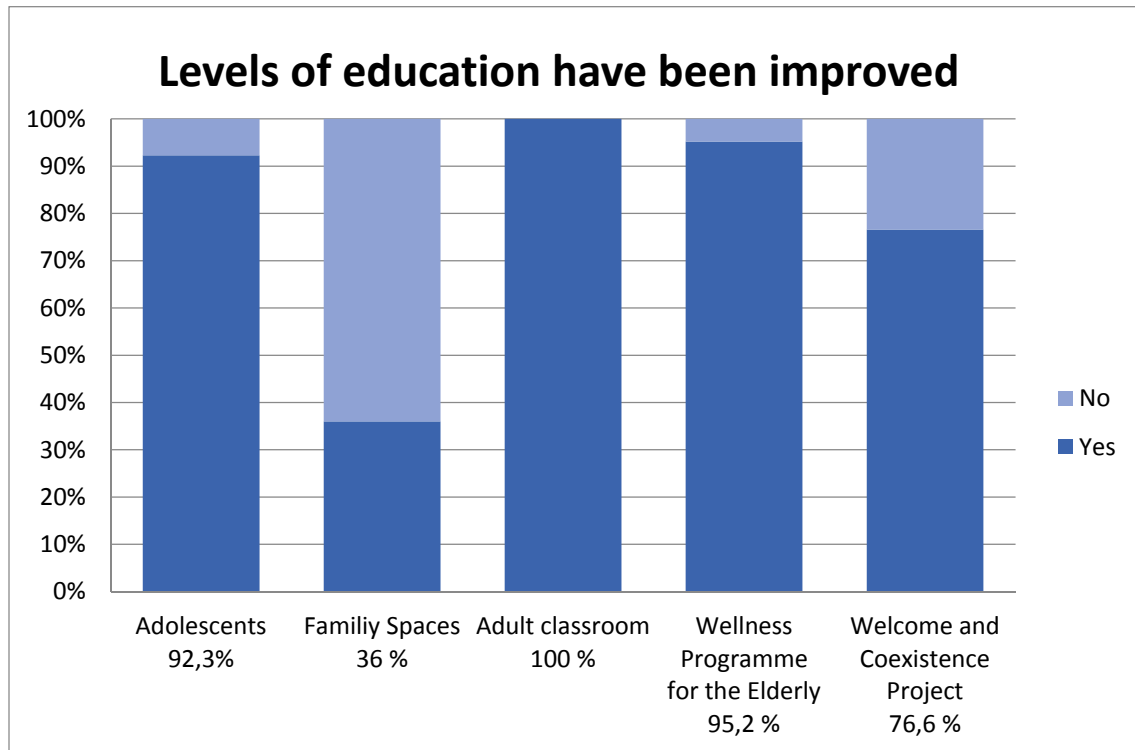
In this graphic from the Department of Justice, it clearly shows that, when we start to work together, juvenile incidents decrease.



### Graphic 3

Levels of education have been improved

All participants in the different programmes state that they have improved their formal education, except those participants in the Family Spaces since this programme is not educational.

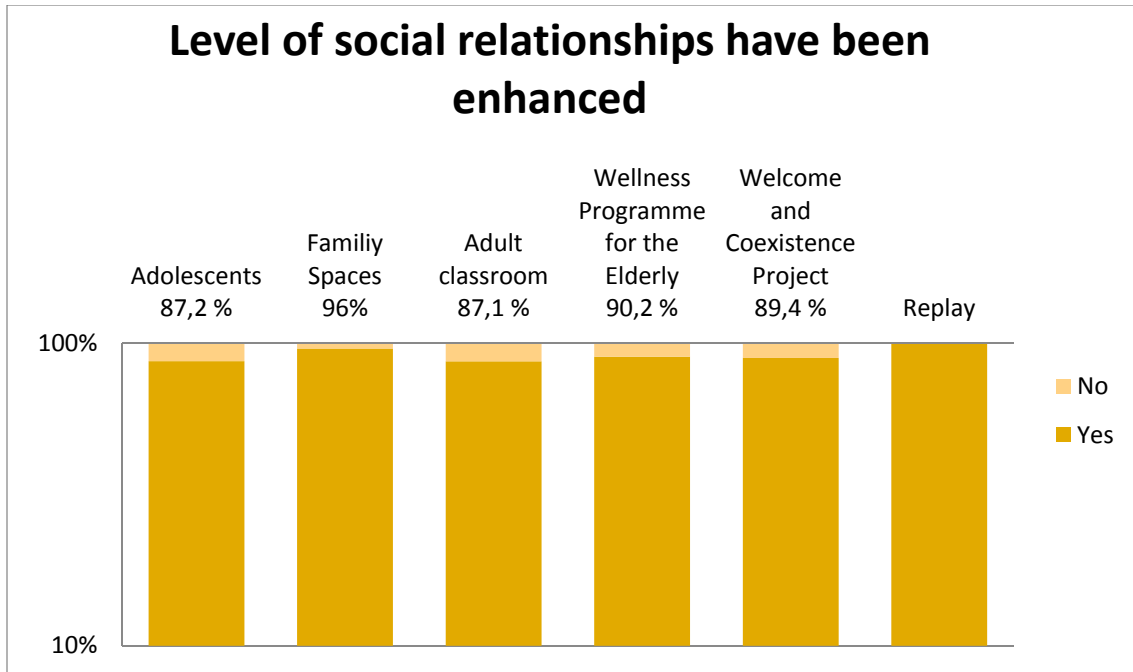


### Graphic 4

Levels of social relationships, in general, have been enhanced

Before beginning their participation in the programmes, the adolescents and newcomers in the town were those who had less satisfaction in their personal relationships. Thanks to their participation in the various programmes, the participants have increased their satisfaction and, in general terms, 96.6 % indicate that they are fairly or very satisfied and no one has stated 'not at all' satisfied.

In conclusion, the vast majority of people indicate that participating in the programmes has allowed them to improve their social relationships.



**Graphic 5**

Within the programmes, the majority of users feel listened to, they value the climate of confidence and support. The majority of users say they have improved their own personal abilities and capacities.

Average of the various elements analyzed according to program ( 1 is nothing and 4 is very)

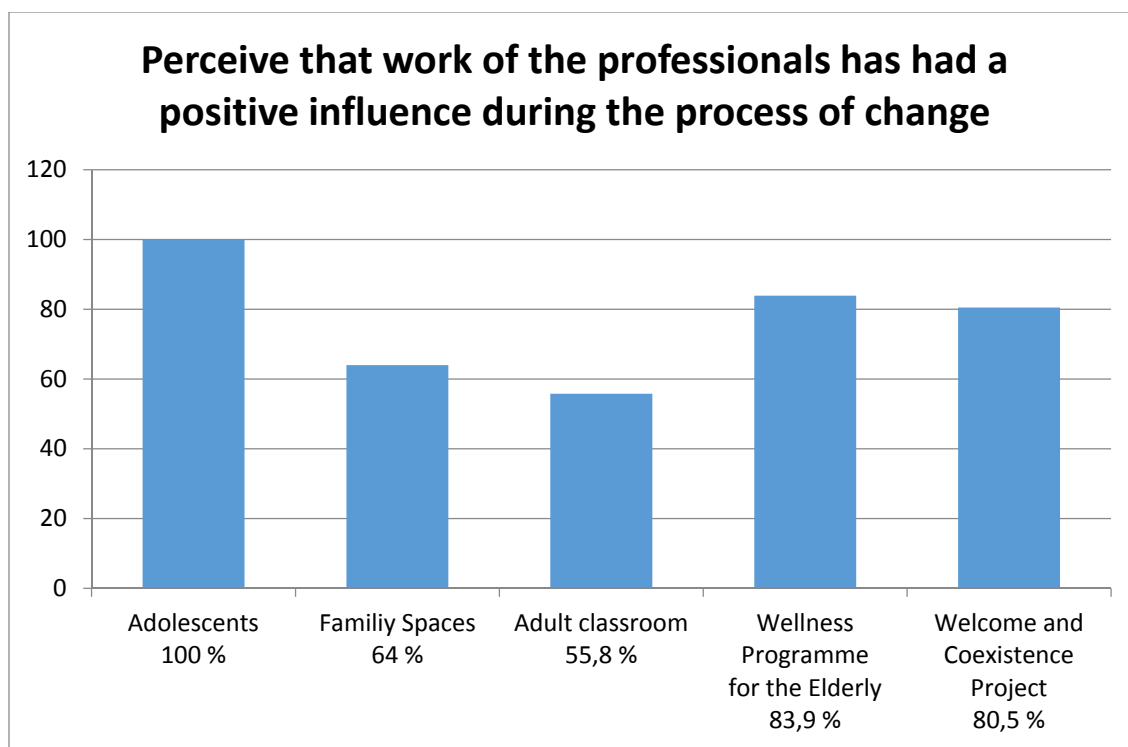
	Feel listened to	Climate of confidence and support	Improved their own personal capacities	Improved their abilities
Adolescents	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.5
Family Spaces	3.9	4.0	3.6	3.6
Adult classroom	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.4
Wellness Programme for the Elderly	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3
Welcome and Coexistence Project	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>



### Graphic 6

Users perceive that the work of the professionals based on this model within the programmes has had a positive influence during the process of change.

Here it should be noted that the majority of people stress that the professionals have helped them to grow personally and to empower themselves. Also, in acquiring basic, professional skills and, in the Family Spaces, the acquisition of parental skills is considerable.



### Graphic 7

Notice the various services working together. In this table, you can see the level of confidence in the service, whether it has been useful to the person's life, if they feel they were accompanied throughout the process and if they have been able to have their voices and opinions heard. The values are high.

## PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Average of the various elements analyzed according to program ( 1 is nothing and 4 is very)  
People who participated in the program

	The various services working together	Feel they were accompanied	Level of trust with the professional	The program has been useful to the person's life	Opportunity to review the program	Opinions heard	Base
Adolescents	3.3	3.0	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.5	35
Family Spaces	3.1	3.7	4.0	3.9	4.0	3.9	7
Adult classroom	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.2	25
Wellness Programme for the Elderly	3.1	3.4	3.8	3.6	2.8	3.0	10
Welcome and Coexistence Project	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.3	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>98</b>

So, after all this, how do we wish to go forward? What do we want to improve? What are the challenges for the future?

Even though we intend to ask the people what the way forward should be, we have some ideas to go on:

- To consolidate and implement the working model as a strategic plan for the town. To have a protective umbrella that includes caring for the people.
- To strengthen and provide structure for networking so that programmes and services are able to grow and improve the quality of life and the well-being of the people. This would be the basis for the improvement and growth of all services, programmes, and projects.
- To continue working to create a community capable of making the resilience, talent and empowerment of the people flourish.
- To generate the participation of citizens to the same level as professional participation.
- To achieve an autonomous and sustainable community.

Now we want to finish with this quotation from Virginia Satir who define well how we want to be:

**ESSENTIALS OF CONGRUENT LIVING**

*To communicate clearly*

*To cooperate rather than compete*

*To empower rather than subjugate*

*To enhance individual uniqueness rather than categorise*

*To use authority to guide and accomplish*

*To love, value and respect ourselves and each other*

*To be personally and socially responsible*

To use problems as challenges and opportunities for creative solutions

*(Virginia Satir Essentials of congruent living in Vila, Sophia:*

*Virginia Satir's Theory of Family Therapy.*

[http://es.slideshare.net/fullscreen/S\\_vila/virginia-satirs-presentations](http://es.slideshare.net/fullscreen/S_vila/virginia-satirs-presentations), p. 12)

**“Teamwork becomes a living network that connects and links people”**



*Picture of some members of the networking*