RESOURCE KIT #3

Adult education in the post COVID-19 era

EPALE

Electronic Platform for **Adult Learning** in Europe

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ABOUT THE KIT

The third edition of the EPALE Resource kit reaches you while European societies are slowly and cautiously **reopening after the long months of lockdown** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During these months, educators have been reflecting on, and discussing, **the future of adult learning**. How to rethink educational activities when the sector has experienced such abrupt changes and disruption? What have we learnt from this emergency situation, both in terms of challenges and opportunities? This Resource kit seeks to contribute to this ongoing discussion, providing some hints and food for thought on this matter.

This is done in two principle ways. First, we have collected some resources explicitly addressing the challenges put forward by this emergency and **the need to refocus adult education**: two in-depth articles provide a broad perspective on barriers to overcome and methodologies to implement, while two online learning courses give you some tips and ideas.

Second, as the COVID-19 emergency has highlighted the importance of building a solid relation within citizenship, this Resource kit provides some inputs on projects and resources to **help strengthen communities and make them more resilient, through adult education**: a toolkit, a MOOC, an ebook and an inspiring Community Story cover a broad range of different topics such as urban gardening, volunteering, libraries and the need to counteract disinformation.

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REFOCUSING ADULT LEARNING

COVID-19: Digital exclusion is a reality

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/covid-19-digital-exclusion-reality]

In this article Raffaela Kihrer, Head of Policy at the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), vividly depicts, with accurate documentation and concrete examples, one of the pressing issues posed by the COVID-19 emergency: **digital exclusion**.

Since the very beginning of the lockdown, the gap between those with good internet connection and electronic devices and those lacking such tools (which have suddenly become primary goods) was apparent. However, the author argues that this was just the most evident side of the situation. The digital divide is also seen in the learning provision and the way in which adult education is funded. When the crisis began, it soon became clear that **many adult education providers were inadequately equipped** both in terms of technological infrastructure and the online teaching skills of educators. As a result, despite the great effort of educational institutions to shift their learning programmes online, evidence shows that the rapid transition to digital learning has resulted in many learners dropping out.

Another important aspect underlined by the author, and expanded on with examples, is the role played by adult education in involving people in social networks and significant interactions (the so-called "**therapeutic dimension" of adult learning**) – a role that during the crisis was brought even more to the fore and that should be the starting point of a new reflection on the future.
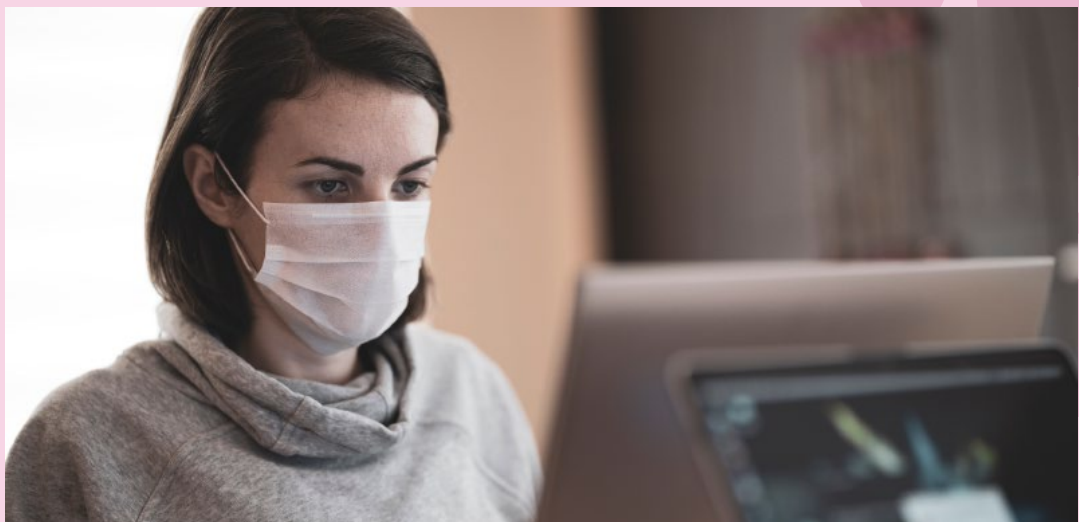

Photo by Engin Akyurt on unsplash.com

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Blended learning in informal learning spaces

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/informal-learning-spaces-adult-learning-institutions-or-learning-and-working-age-digital]

The need to adapt adult education to new (digital) challenges is not new and, even in the pre-COVID-19 era, it has already led to the creation and experimentation of open and collaborative blended learning formats. This article starts from the concept of **blended learning** – a hybrid learning setting that combines virtual and non-virtual learning spaces – to introduce a new model: **social blended learning**. This is a form of competence-oriented blended learning that is linked to a challenging, practice-based project, and that by integrating social software makes informal, self-organised and networked learning possible.

Learning courses to reduce educational inequalities of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/regap-reducing-educational-gap-migrants-and-refugees-eu-countries-open-0]

ReGap is an Erasmus+ project whose goal is to reduce the educational inequalities of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, through **open-source e-learning courses** about employment, health, social security, education, gender and justice. The courses are translated into English, Portuguese, Italian, Norwegian and Macedonian, and can be done **fully online or in a blended mode** (with an educator in the classroom).

3D Lab Online Course

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/3d-lab-online-course]

This online course, created as part of the Erasmus+ project *3D Lab*, provides a great opportunity to **engage in something very concrete – craft making – with the support of digital technologies**. The course was originally created for the education of young people, but it can be used by educators working with people of all ages, including adults. It can also be used by adults who want to gain knowledge of **3D modelling and printing**.

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BUILDING A RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Urban gardening as an education tool
[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/urban-gardening]

Urban gardens are expanding around the world to encourage **local production and consumption, social inclusion, dialogue and the adoption of a sustainable way of life**. As they implement participative practices in their design, management and mode of operation, they can be an excellent way to help citizens to interact, and communities to grow.

This toolkit, developed as part of the Erasmus+ project *Urban Gardening*, is aimed at any person or organisation eager to **use urban gardening as an educational tool**. Partners from seven European Countries have designed this toolkit presenting useful keys to develop transversal skills by using urban gardens as a support. The toolkit proposes possible processes that can be adapted to different environments and to the public for whom the garden is intended. The toolkit includes: practical steps on how to set up a garden; how to involve volunteers; how to involve stakeholders.

Photo by Elain Casap on unsplash.com

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Ebook on volunteer organizations

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/volunteer-organizations-input-community-education-project-ebook]

This ebook, developed by six volunteer organisations from all around Europe as part of the Erasmus+ project *Volunteer Organizations' Input to Community Education (VOICE)*, explores the **community education approach** practiced by volunteer, intercultural and neighbourhood centres. This tool is a valuable resource if you need **practical tips** on how to implement community education in local communities, as well as a **collection of good practices** for learning and training programs.

Donna Moore: a Community Story on the role of libraries for inclusion

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/donna-moore-community-story-scotland-uk]

In this Community Story, Donna Moore tells us about her fascinating work at the **Glasgow Women's Library**, where she supports women of all ages and all different backgrounds, cultures, ages, levels of ability to read and write. Working with **women at risk of exclusion** has proven especially challenging during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, it has also seen the flourishing of ideas and initiatives to support the local community.

MOOC to counteract disinformation

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/mooc-strategic-communication-counter-security-threats-disinformation-era]

Critical thinking has certainly emerged as an essential skill to navigate through these difficult times. This interdisciplinary MOOC, framed under the Erarmus + *CRESCEnt* project addresses the challenge of **building awareness and developing resilience to disinformation**, fake news, and hostile information influencing campaigns. While this MOOC seeks, in particular, to increase the key knowledge and competences of institutional spokespersons and journalists, it can be a valuable resource for all.

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