

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE
EPALE and Erasmus+ Adult Education 2021

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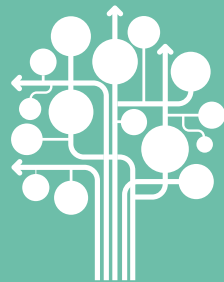


LIFE SKILLS

at the focus of adult education

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LIFE SKILLS

at the focus of adult education

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE
EPALE and Erasmus+ Adult Education 2022

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The EPALE themed conference “Life Skills as a Focus in Adult Education” was held online on 24 March 2022. It gave the more than 140 participants from 20 countries the opportunity to identify the potential offered by life skills for adult education and how EPALE, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, can contribute to making these skills accessible to everyone. Life skills are building blocks for independence and self-efficacy. They enable adults to lead independent, self-determined lives and at the same time to actively participate in society.

In connection with the overarching theme of life skills, this publication presents successful approaches in adult education for imparting reading, writing, and mathematical skills as well as competences related to finance, digital technology, health, civil society, and the environment.

Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller (OeAD) provides insight into the current developments at the ERASMUS+ Adult Education and EPALE, followed by an introduction to the topic of “Life skills for adults” by Estera Možina (European Basic Skills Network). Gerhard Bisovsky (Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres), Sonja Muckenhuber (BILL – Institut für Bildungsentwicklung Linz), and Elke Beneke (Verein für Bildung und Lernen) address the life skills strategy in Austria in their articles. Helen Ryan (National Adult Literacy Agency) presents ways to improve adults’ reading, writing, math, and computer skills using a cross-societal approach based on the example of Ireland.

The approaches to adult education described in this conference publication show how life skills can be brought

to light, promoted, and advanced. Many of these methods stem from Erasmus+ projects that were presented in idea and networking pools at the conference and are also described in this publication, including the projects Green Deals for Communities, CUMILA, FLIGHT, RESET, FINANZFIT, Invisible talents & Dreamlike Neighbourhood, and Psychosocial Basic Education. Finally, the method of blended and flipped learning in basic education is covered.

The publication also provides information about the opportunities that the Erasmus+ programme offers in the area of Learning Mobility of Individuals and Partnerships for Cooperations, and how EPALE, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, can provide support for project work.

The OeAD as the national agency for Erasmus+ Education is coordinating EPALE in Austria. OeAD, Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation, would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the conference and to this publication.

The OeAD wishes you an interesting read!

Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller
Eva Baloch-Kaloianov
Andreas Koreimann
Andrea Nakarada

The topic of **life skills**...

... is also one of the priorities for the Adult Education department at the Federal Ministry of Education and will certainly continue to be in the coming years. The challenges we deal with in this context are diverse, including topics such as sustainability, climate change, health care, education, and financial literacy, which are of course also relevant for our programmes in the Adult Education department, particularly with regard to teaching basic skills.

As many of you surely know, the Ministry of Education launched the Adult Education Initiative (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung) about ten years

ago, under which we have been offering free educational programmes throughout Austria in two programme areas, one for basic education and one for adults who want to obtain a school-leaving qualification, ever since. The financing is provided by the federal government and the provinces and was supplemented by funds from the European Social Fund a bit later. We have achieved quite a bit since 2012, such as setting up a coherent financing system as well as offering and ensuring uniform quality criteria on a nationwide basis, including accreditation of the educational institutions and education offerings. Finally, we were able to expand the offerings

by utilising ESF funding – we implement a volume of roughly 25 million in this segment each year.

Further development is another important priority in this area: In 2012, the Act on the Examination to Complete Compulsory Education (Pflichtschulabschlussprüfungs-gesetz) was also passed and included preparation and exam procedures that are appropriate for adults. In the field of basic education, we developed a learning outcome-oriented curriculum in cooperation with experts that is currently being updated and represents a benchmark for basic education. We have included many life skills in the



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basic education offerings since 2012, many of which are also addressed at this conference, such as learning skills, personal development, and many more.

Life skills play a major role in these offerings from the beginning, because one of the most important elements in the Adult Education Initiative is the lifeworld orientation of the participants. Trainers tailor their offerings and content to the participants' lifeworld and focus on their needs. I also want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the basic education trainers, who show tremendous commitment and

a high level of expertise here. And this expertise will also be incorporated into a qualification profile for basic educators that will be published soon and demonstrates the high level of competence in this field and in this profession. As you can see, we are continuously working to improve the programme and we will continue to monitor the topic of life skills at the Ministry of Education.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the conference and to this publication and of course all of the employees at the EPAL National Support Service, who have done a highly professional job of organising

the conferences for many years, and who once again selected a wonderful topic this year. The tremendous diversity of life skills can also be seen in the many interesting workshops on a wide variety of topics that were offered as part of the event and are reflected in this publication. I also hope that you can take away some ideas that can be applied in your own work.





CONTRIBUTIONS

Erasmus+ and EPALE: Current developments

Life skills as a focus of EPALE and Erasmus+

“Life skills” have become an important topic at the national and European level in recent years. They have found their way into policy documents of the European Commission and are also reflected in the Erasmus+ programme. “Skills for life” are explicitly defined as action 8 in the European Skills Agenda. The focus is on formal, lifelong, and intercultural learning, with the “skills for life” primarily stressing the promotion of basic education. Austria places particular emphasis on this area.

Reaching and supporting learners with fewer opportunities
The term “life skills” has been expanded significantly in recent years and, in the European context, goes far beyond the so-called basic skills. It encompasses all types of competences that improve a person’s individual ability to shape his/her life and, beyond this, enable him/her to actively participate in society. Thus, health literacy, financial skills, media competence, social competence, and resilience are also included under this term. The goal is to particularly reach people who are difficult to get through to but at the same time need the most support. The digital platform EPALE and Erasmus+ offer many useful tools in this context.

For example, EPALE has provided many resources in connection with the Ukraine crisis that are helpful in dealing with and providing support to people who have experienced trauma. These tools and services are expanded on an ongoing basis. At the same time, EPALE offers players from various areas of the adult education segment and funding programmes the opportunity to network and exchange ideas and experiences. The topic of life skills is an important priority for the platform and it is addressed for users in the form of various articles and services.

EPALE in Austria and Europe: facts and figures

EPALE deals with relevant and key topics in the field of adult education and offers various related services. It provides tools and further information and at the same time supplies valuable connections to the Erasmus+ funding programme. EPALE is now used by well over 100,000 users across Europe. By comparison, this figure was only around 50,000 just over two years ago. This impressive growth in the number of users is also evident in the Austrian statistics: There was a significant increase in 2019 versus the previous years, with over 700 users.



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The enquiries from project partners and the number of organisations registered on EPALE also nearly doubled during this time period. EPALE has also seen significant growth in its followers on social media.

One reason for the rise in user figures is the pandemic. During this time, the possibilities offered by such a digital platform were recognised more clearly and were utilised accordingly. Now people do not want to do without this service. At the same time, the platform itself was developed further: One highlight in 2021 was the introduction of the Erasmus+Space on EPALE. This tool (<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/erasmus-space>) helps interested parties to implement their projects better, more easily, and more efficiently.

Trends in the adult education area of the Erasmus+ programme

Erasmus+ provides various funding possibilities while placing emphasis on the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities. The goal is to support mobility activities for educators and, above all, learners with fewer opportunities. In this context, the promotion of life skills can also serve as a good avenue for reaching these target groups in particular.

The following trends are being seen in the Erasmus+ programme that started in 2021: First off, the so-called accreditations offer a new element for the promotion of mobilities in all areas of education. This means that

organisations and institutions can get accredited in the programme and then easily submit budget applications for their educational mobility activities. This essentially makes them permanent and “institutionalised” members of the Erasmus+ community. In addition, first-time applicants and smaller institutions have the option to apply for traditional mobility projects. Overall, it appears that the new system of accreditation, which equates to a paradigm shift to some extent, is being received well. Many institutions are already part of the Erasmus+ adult education community.

However, the pandemic has led to declines in the area of mobilities. In the first programme year, budget applications were submitted by only half of the accredited institutions. There were therefore many successful accreditations, but still comparatively few actual mobilities. There were therefore many successful accreditations, but still comparatively few actual mobilities.

The situation is very different when it comes to cooperation projects. The trend seen in recent years has continued here: The interest in this project format is very high in Austria, and OeAD, the national agency for Erasmus+, is thus receiving a high number of applications. For the first time ever, there were two application rounds for this funding track in 2021. OeAD received 41 applications in the first call in 2021 and 49 in the second call. In total, this is a very high number of submissions compared to other departments. The topic of life skills is strongly reflected in the titles and content of the submitted projects. The project topics included media competence, soft skills, political participation, resilience, digital literacy, and civic engagement.

The “Life Skills” conference and this publication are intended to provide impetus for new projects by describing selected Erasmus+ adult education projects and to encourage people to take advantage of the Erasmus+ programme.



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Life Skills for adults

“Life is the ultimate curriculum!”

(After T. Ireland, ICAE Workshop at the World Social Forum 2021 on why is Freirean's pedagogy important nowadays.)

Introduction

Life skills have been in the focus of adult education policies and practice in Europe in recent years. Although there are already many different definitions and applications of the term ‘life skills’ in practice, one hardly argues which view or definition is right or wrong. In general, in adult education practice the term has been quickly accepted. The situation is somewhat similar with the term ‘functional literacy’, which most people easily understand and apply to their concrete situations in contrast for example to terms like ‘key competences’ or solely ‘literacy’ and/or ‘numeracy’. Nevertheless, there have been several attempts to define the content and the scope of the term as well as the theoretical underpinning and origin of the term. Among them, there are the endeavours of the partnership implementing the two-year Life Skills for Europe (LSE)¹ project that was completed in 2018. LSE was one of the first international projects that strived to systemise existing definitions and

approaches to life skills in adult education in Europe (Javrh et al, 2018) and develop a life skills learning framework for adults. The LSE project was proposed and coordinated by EAEA², the organisation that advocates for the role of non-formal adult education for social inclusion in the EU. This article summarises the understanding of life skills mainly as it is perceived within the LSE project.

Life skills in the focus of adult education policy and practice

Life skills are not only the focus of adult education policies and practices on a national level. The European Skills Agenda also emphasises the role of non-formal adult education for the benefit of individuals, the society, and the economy (EC, 2020). Action 8 specifically points out ‘Skills for Life’. In addition, life skills are supported by the European Pillar of Social Rights stressing lifelong learning as a right (EC, 2017). The result is an EU headline target stating that at least 60 per cent of adults should participate in training every year by 2030 (EC, 2021). The life skills approach is also in the scope of endeavours of adult education associations in the EU such as the European basic skills network (EBSN)³, which has been supporting the

development of integrated policies and measures, as well as holistic approaches and programmes for the development of basic skills of adults in the EU.

The rationale for the focus of adult education policies on life skills is the present state of the art as regards the level of skills and participation in lifelong learning by certain groups of adults in most Member States. To mention only a few aspects:

- millions of adults with low skill levels in the EU or with insufficient skills for lifelong learning, life and work (one in four adults aged 16 to 65 in the EU has a low level of literacy and/or numeracy skills [OECD, 2019]),
- evidence that the level of education and age are factors determining participation in lifelong learning, adults with low education levels participate from 1.6 to 12.1 times less frequently compare to adults with tertiary education (labour force survey data series 2011–2020),
- a growing number of migrants and refugees in the EU who need to develop skills and competences in order to live in the EU,
- insufficiently effective programmes for the development of skills and competences that will enable long-term effects for the most vulnerable groups on a larger scale,
- evidence that the cost of the gap in skills for societies and economies is higher than the necessary investments in skills,
- evidence that better skills lead to individual and societal benefits (better health, higher trust of others, better wages, high participation in voluntary activities, high political efficacy [OECD, 2019]).

The question is why educational policies do not reach the most vulnerable adults. And also, what can life-skills approaches offer in this respect?

Why life skills?

Life skills are closely related to the key challenges adults are faced with in the modern world. They are intertwined with the particular situations throughout life because they are the result of a constructive processing of information, experiences, and more as part of one's daily life and work. The social dimensions are particularly important as they compel individuals to acquire skills and intentionally develop attitudes and values in order to face and master real-life situations. And finally, activities over the course of life take place in a variety of contexts (political process, workplace, at home, in the community or in non-formal and informal settings), sectors and domains (health, environment, gender, work etc.) of human existence. Therefore, in the context of different life situations, life skills need to be adapted and defined.

It is inevitable that there are a plethora of different views and understanding of what life skills are. The constituents of generally defined life skills may include skills and abilities necessary to apply conceptual thinking and reflection in concrete situations; capacities for effective interaction with the environment and motivation to learn; as well as psychological prerequisites for successful performance (problem solving capacities, self-confidence and skills for critical thinking). In practice, definitions or even frameworks for life skills may focus on all three or just one of those aspects, most often psychological prerequisites for successful performance.



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There are also a life-wide and life-long perspectives of life skills. Life skills are not limited to a specific age or stage in life. Lifelong or in this case 'life skills learning' is reflected in the knowledge, experience, wisdom, harmony and self-realisation rooted in the practical affairs of ordinary men and women (and not only in the national curriculum). They can also imply success in personal and professional life. From a social point of view, they can mean cohesion, happiness, well-being and the good functioning of a group.

Influential authors and their concepts

A literature review reveals several influential authors and their thoughts that are very relevant for understanding life skills learning. For example, Elinor Ostrom, an American

economist (Nobel Prize laureate) gave us insight on involving people in governing the commons (Ostrom, 1990). Paolo Freire, a Brazilian adult educator, advocated for the development of skills of reflection that enables adults to take social action to improve conditions for themselves and their communities (Freire, 1970). Knud Illeris, a Danish professor of lifelong learning, pointed out the transformative role of learning and its influence on shaping one's identity (Illeris, 2014). Specifically, the use of capabilities was drawn from the ideas of the Indian welfare economist Amartya Sen (also a Nobel laureate) and the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum. Sen has a lifelong preoccupation with inequality on a global scale, and with how we can use our individual and collective potential. His central idea is that we should pay attention to the development

of human potential or capacity to achieve well-being. Sen advocated and developed his ideas on Martha Nussbaum's analysis of gender issues in development that flows from the 'capabilities' approach to the analysis of quality of life. Nussbaum and Sen attempted to define well-being in an objective way, by identifying a set of core human capabilities that are critical to full human functioning and assessing well-being (and the success of development policies) by the degree to which the individual is in circumstances which lead to the realisation of these capabilities (Nussbaum and Sen eds., 1993).

Many aspects of the above-mentioned thoughts and theoretical backgrounds have already been shaping the existing definitions and/or frameworks for life skills education including the one proposed by the LSE project. For example the Unicef definition of life skills, which is part of a comprehensive life skills framework that promotes a holistic approach to education. According to Unicef, 'life skills are a set of universally applicable and contextual abilities, attitudes and socio-emotional competencies that enable individuals to learn, make informed decisions and exercise rights to lead a healthy and productive life and subsequently become agents of change'. Furthermore, it is stated that life skills are a complement to and not a substitute for foundational skills like reading and mathematics and the two must be integrated rather than focused upon in isolation or parallel (Unicef, 2019, p.7 and 23).

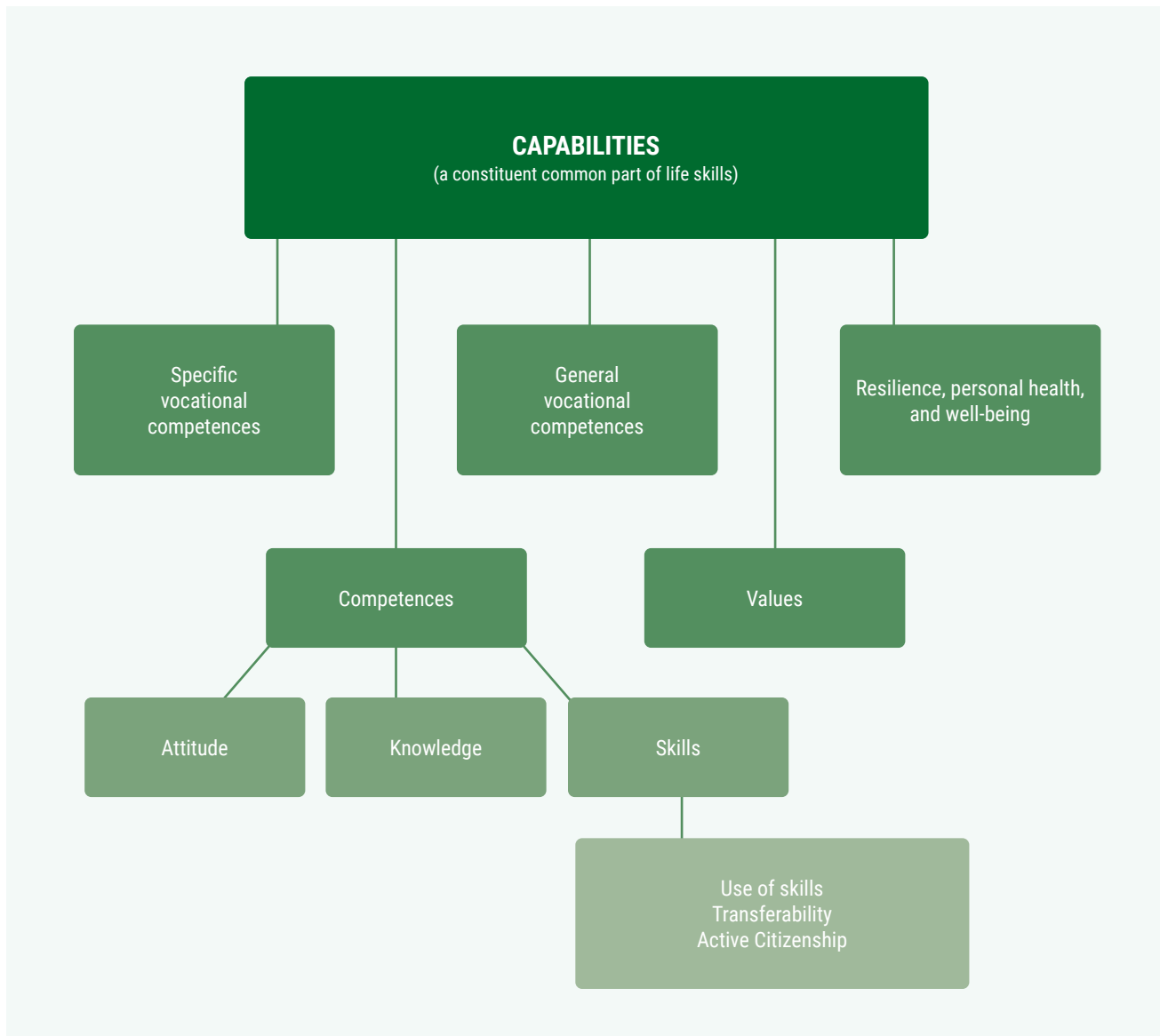
Life skills for Europe – definition and learning framework

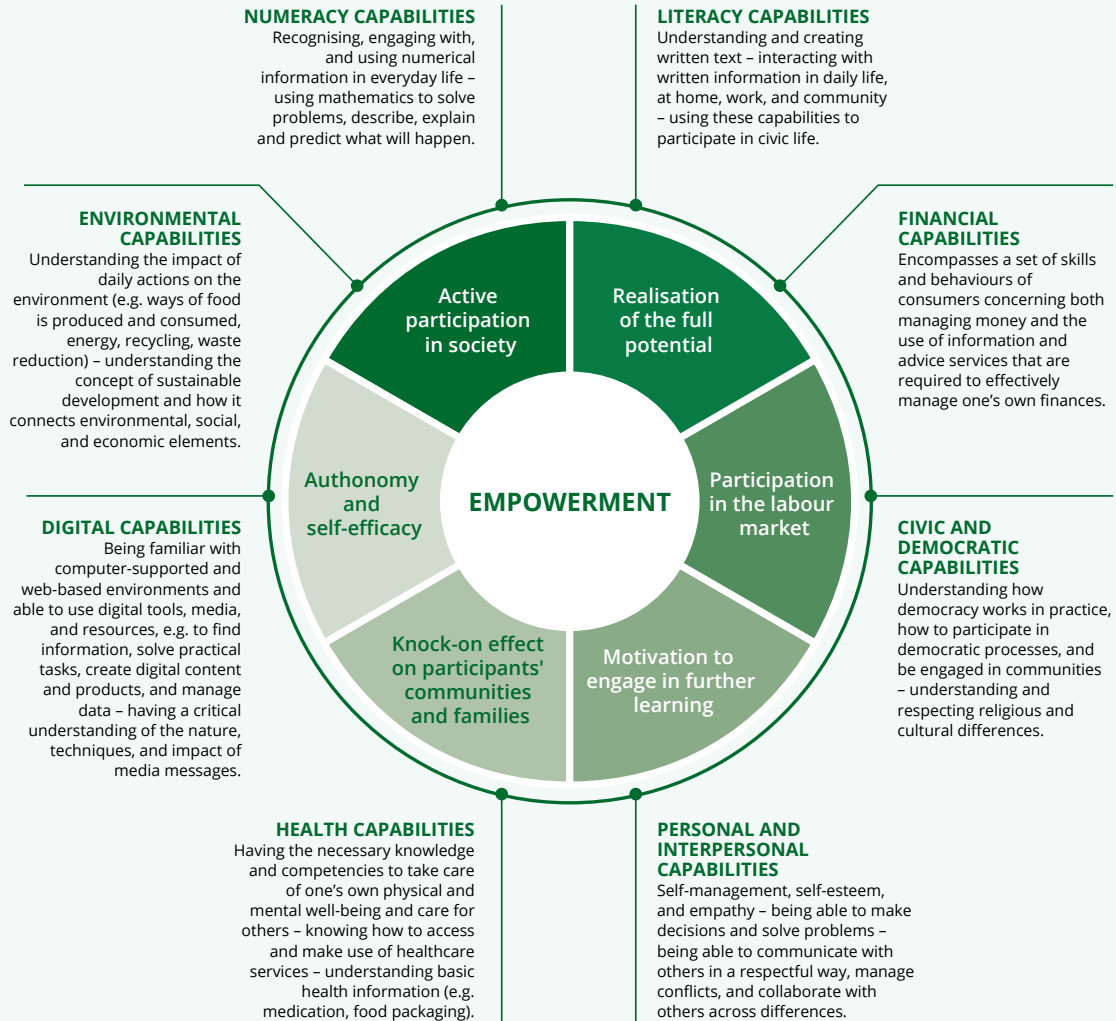
The interpretation of the taxonomy and the relations among terms such as skills, knowledge, competences,

capabilities etc. is one of the authentic contribution of the LSE project. The insights into literature and existing practices within the LSE projects enabled the following definition of life skills: *'Life skills are a constituent part of capabilities for life and work in a particular social, cultural and environmental context'* (Javrh et al, 2018, p. 4). The definition is simple and applicable in adult education. It does not imply a definite set of skills or capabilities, rather is open to amendments and combinations of skills. Life skills are sets of skills and capabilities that can lead to 'an adult who is capable', for example of social and civic engagement, self-efficacy, employability and critical thinking. The types of life skills emerge as a response to the needs of the individual in real-life situations.

The term 'capabilities' has been proposed with the purpose of upgrading the definition of (key) competences. In this respect, the LSE report clearly emphasises that the critical and ethical dimensions are integral parts of the development of (key) competences, which are represented by the term capabilities.

According to LSE, understanding the capabilities does not depend on the context. Regardless of specific circumstances, they allow functional responses and actions in a wide range of different activities based on critical judgement. They are transferable among various professions and, above all, they enable individual development and active participation in work and society. Life skills are not always learned through education but are often acquired through experience and practice in daily life. They are one of the principal gains of adult learning and education alongside literacy and numeracy, practical skills (such as digital skills) and cultural learning.





The LSE learning framework⁴ offers a consistent framework for life skills learning that is applicable across Europe. The framework aims to put in practice the common understanding of life skills by defining eight key types of capabilities for life and work. The eight types of capabilities in the learning framework are as follows: numeracy, literacy, financial, civic and democratic, personal and interpersonal, health, digital and environmental capability. The combinations of different capabilities in general empower adults to become lifelong learners, to solve problems, to manage their lives and to participate in the community. This in reality means, for example, taking care of their physical and mental health, actively contributing to their well-being, mastering financial matters and coping with the digital environment.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes described in the framework take account of a range of international and European national competence frameworks and build on the European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, which supports learners of all ages in developing key competences and basic skills for learning. The capabilities included in the framework also reflect LSE partner input on national and local content, for example existing curricula and other relevant resources relating to specific capabilities and are influenced by LSE project research on good practices and tools. The framework offers links to these resources for each capability area.

For adult education practitioners, the framework offers two aspects, difficulty of skill/capability level and familiarity of context for each capability, which allows for a range of starting points and supports the recognition of learners' progression. The framework is available in English, Slovenian, Danish and Greek.

There is an acknowledged overlap between some capabilities, for example numeracy and financial, digital and literacy and financial etc. This reflects the real-world interrelatedness of life skills. The framework begins with personal/interpersonal capability as this describes the skills, knowledge and attitudes which underpin all the capabilities. The framework is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. Rather, it is presented as a starting point which can be added to and adapted to address the needs and requirements of different groups of learners. Equally, it is not presented as a programme of learning that learners work through from start to finish; learning should be prioritised so that the capabilities selected reflect learners' needs.

In conclusion

Our vision is that in the future every educational endeavour will have to ask itself whether and to what extent it promotes learning activities that help develop life skills that are vital to coping with the key issues of one's life and survival. Existing practices have shown that life skills can be systematically acquired and reinforced through non-formal and informal learning settings. The focus is on empowerment of adults through meaningful learning.

The research evidence and adult education practice clearly show that basic skills such as numeracy, literacy and digital skills are foundations for lifelong learning and also for the development of capabilities for life and work. It is essential that the development of integrated policies as well as holistic approaches and programmes for the development of basic skills of adults in the EU are supported.

Life skills cannot be learned in an abstract and theoretical way – the individual must collect, probe and discuss his experience where it happens in real life. It is important not to forget the contextuality of life skills, because this is the main reason for the success of life skills learning. Life skills need to be adapted to the specific contexts of each country, group and individual.

Life skills are in constant evolution in terms of individual, economic, social and cultural contexts. There are bound to be individuals and groups who cannot attain some life skills.

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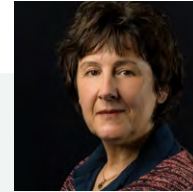
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Links

- 1 <https://eaea.org/project/life-skills-for-europe-lse/>
- 2 <https://eaea.org/>
- 3 <https://basicskills.eu/>
- 4 <https://eaea.org/project/life-skills-for-europe-lse/?pid=10731>



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Estera Možina is head of thematic field adult literacy at the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, SIAE and was a member of the EBSN Executive Committee 2016–2022. She was one of the promoters of the first national adult literacy scheme in Slovenia in the 1990s. Later she was a national coordinator of two OECD surveys on adult skills e.g. IALS 1998–2000 and PIAAC 2014–2016 that generated several initiatives regarding the adult literacy development in Slovenia, such as National adult literacy strategy (2004) and the new concept of adult literacy education (2001). She was involved as a national coordinator for several international projects including Bell, Life Skills for Europe and Pro-fi-Train. Currently Estera is head of a 6-years project dealing with the development of key competences of low skilled adults 2016–2022 and a 2-years project on Financial Literacy for Adults 2022–2024.

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Importance of non-formal adult education for a life skills strategy

The fact that the European Commission is taking on the topic of life skills within the scope of the new European agenda for adult learning¹ should be seen as highly positive as it underscores the significance of non-formal adult education in particular. For it is precisely this non-formal adult education – in other words, freely accessible and not qualification-oriented adult education – that creates the framework for the implementation of a strategy for life skills. In Austria, non-formal adult education is well established in the Austrian Adult Education Conference² working platform.

The prerequisites for the successful implementation of a life skills strategy are well-functioning structures for non-formal and general adult education as well as – and this is also important to mention – a participatory approach at all levels. Collaborations with civil society organisations such as adult education associations form the basis for a successful implementation, while learning by doing is an important didactic foundation in many areas of life skills. Along with numeracy and literacy, life skills include financial competences, digital competences, environmental competences, skills and competences in connection with society ranging from political skills and societal skills to personal and interpersonal skills as well as health care skills. These skills are essential when it comes to actively participating in society and contribute towards increasing quality of life.

Life skills and competences for the labour market using digital competences as an example

Many personal, social, and transversal competences cannot clearly be separated from skills for the labour market. However, it does raise the question of the context in which skills are learned and acquired, and whether a transfer from one context into the next is easily possible. Another

decisive question is the level of education upon which one is building, and which learning skills and motivations for learning are present. How skills and competences can be improved or acquired by people with a low educational level remains a challenge in the field of education.

Two examples from the area of basic digital competences should illustrate this issue: The Carinthian folk high schools (VHS) are active in many small communities with their “VHS on Tour”³ programme and provide mobile IT training and assistance on-site. This allows them to reach people who do not usually visit adult education institutions. The other example from large urban areas is the “Digi-Infotage”⁴ digital information days that are conducted at council housing buildings by the Viennese folk high schools. Digital experts offer help on-site with topics ranging from mobile phone signatures to Internet safety. A very interesting secondary effect in this context is that people with a need for basic education can be reached in this way. With outreach, people less inclined towards education can be addressed.

Critical media literacy for democracy education

Personal development is a core issue for many non-formal adult education institutions. The focus can be on one’s own life, and paths that have been embarked on can be compared with one’s own desires. A strength-oriented approach is followed, which promotes the ability to reflect and rethink things. The aim here is prevention, because this is the sole focus of these measures. These offerings enable people to reflect thoroughly about their prospects in life, and to search for ways of improving.

Topics such as media literacy, critical thinking, or even political education are implemented at many different events

and also in the smaller projects of adult education institutions and civil society initiatives. The Austrian Society for Political Education (ÖGPB)⁵ funds about 240 small projects from around 200 educational institutions. Many of these small projects deal with aspects concerning life skills. The Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) also offers a series of radio and television programmes dealing with the subject of media literacy and critical thinking, as do the independent radio stations in Austria. Several of these programmes have already received the Radio Award for Adult Education⁶ and the Television Award for Adult Education⁷. The massive open online course on democracy, Demokratie-MOOC (<https://demooc.at>), has an entire module dedicated to the subject of media literacy. In addition, the website “erwachsenenbildung.at” of the Austrian Ministry of Education focuses on critical media literacy⁸. The website sets itself apart by explaining the ownership and power structures behind the media and thus contributes towards improving the quality of democratic life. Critical media literacy promotes a reflective approach and participation in society while also supporting empowerment.

More funding required for environmental education in the area of adult education

Environmental literacy is implemented as education in sustainable development within the scope of the UN’s 2030 Agenda. The main focus of many activities in this context is on schools, and projects to achieve this are currently only being funded for schools. Adult education institutions are carrying out a series of events in this regard. Given the complexity of the topic, collaborations with organisations from the area of environmental education and with civil society initiatives have proven beneficial.

In order to implement these and also other strategies successfully in adult education, it is important and necessary to provide funding for events and projects, as is already the case for schools in this area.

Particular attention needs to be paid to adult education in this connection, because it makes up the longest period of education during the course of one's life and its effects are far-reaching. A European study⁹, followed up by a study carried out in Austria on the benefits of learning¹⁰, shows that adult education has an impact on the individual as well as on society.

There are many examples of good practical applications in Austria, in particular regarding the basic configuration of education and fundamental cultural competences. With the Adult Education Initiative (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung)¹¹, we have a model that stands out throughout Europe and that can cover many areas of basic life skills.



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Hormandlger

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Links

- 1 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)&from=EN)
- 2 https://erwachsenenbildung.at/themen/eb_in_oesterreich/organisation/keboe.php
- 3 For more information see www.vhsktn.at/infosnews/detail/vhs-on-tour
- 4 For more information see www.vhs.at/de/digiinfotag#:~:text=Bewohner*innen%2520und%2520Anrainer*innen,ins%2520Jahr%25202022%2520zur%2520Verf%25C3%25BCgung.
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- 11 For more information see www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/initiative-erwachsenenbildung/was-ist-das

Life Skills in basic education

Development of basic education in Austria from the pioneering phase ...

If one looks at basic education in Austria from its early beginnings until today, then it becomes clear that life skills have been an integral component of basic education in Austria since the start, even though – over the course of time – their significance has changed somewhat.

In the beginning, in the 1990s, basic education was a side topic offered by only a few Viennese institutions, e.g. VHS Floridsdorf with its focus on German as a first language, followed by Isop Graz, ABC Salzburg, and VHS Linz. At the same time, there was also a literacy initiative at VHS Vienna-Ottakring for German as a second language. During this period, basic education for people in Austria with German as a first language was viewed and developed separately from basic education for people with other first languages.

All of these initiatives started from zero; there were no requirements, but also no support in the form of materials, strategies, or course designs. As a result, the planners as well as trainers had to demonstrate great dedication and commitment; there was plenty of pioneering spirit, but hardly any ready-to-use learning material for adults who were just beginning to read and write. For this reason, materials were compiled individually for participants from the very beginning, which also meant that the work was

very much oriented towards participants. The methods and didactics which were applied, as well as the materials, were oriented towards the resources and needs of the course participants, but also towards the requirements for their particular social contexts. This very consistent and individualised orientation towards the respective participants inevitably led to the main focus being right on life skills – and everything which the participants required for their daily life or work routine in addition to reading and writing.

... to a virtually country-wide offering in Austria

Disadvantages at that stage included the great demands placed upon and challenges faced by trainers and planners as well as the lack of financial security (participants would usually pay course fees, but there was little public funding).

Already in 2003, UNESCO declared the Literacy Decade, which had the great objective for Austria – that was also decided in Austria – that by the end of that decade (i.e. 2013), nobody in Austria should be lacking basic education. That was a noble objective, of course, and was not entirely achieved; however, good progress has been made towards realising it. Funded basic education networks and projects were created.

The **Adult Education Initiative (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung)** which was brought into being in 2012 succeeded



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in establishing a virtually country-wide offering in Austria that is available free-of-charge to participants. However, what did this development mean for the field of basic education? There were a great many newcomers to the field, and in addition to the interests in enabling participants to participate in life, in everyday life, and in their daily work routine, other interests also came to the fore. A certain degree of arbitrariness ensued, but (almost) anything was possible! Participants started attending courses primarily with the aim of learning how to read and write, do mathematics, or acquire digital competences. Sometimes the offerings would go way beyond these primary objectives expressed by participants, or would replace these in part. Many elements were offered which individual providers or trainers found to be important within the scope of life skills. These were not always things which we would classify as life skills today; nevertheless, this proliferation resulted in a highly pleasing variety of content, although it did at times have very little to do with the basic skills in the area of basic education, i.e. reading, writing, mathematics, and digital

competences. With the introduction of the basic education curriculum in 2019¹, the focus very clearly returned to these areas of competence, which also constitute the contents of basic educational offerings in the programme planning document of the basic education initiative. Life skills are to be found mainly in the guidelines for basic educational offerings that are formulated in the curriculum. Furthermore, it falls under the responsibility of planners and trainers to incorporate these in settings, methods, and the selection of topics.

Just as it is important to consider participants' abilities and how to develop these further when imparting technical competences, it is also necessary to ensure that basic educational offerings are varied for the benefit of participants. People who want to start learning how to read and write from the beginning need to be able to find suitable courses for this, just as do those who wish to increase their degree of proficiency in these skills. Offerings must not only be available for people with German as their first language, but also for people with other first languages. This level of diversity is currently not sufficiently represented in basic educational course offerings for a number of different reasons. It may have to do with the fact that, among other reasons, the pioneering spirit from the early days has given way to routine, and that standardisation and harmonisation have taken over to some degree. Heterogeneous groups in which participants' different learning needs are considered on an individual basis are no longer something which can be taken for granted. For trainers, the job description and the challenges they face have changed. At the same time, a support structure has been developed over the last few years in the form of free professionalisation offerings for trainers so as to be able to meet these changing – and, as some may find, growing – requirements.



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Database for basic educational offerings and literacy hotline

And this brings me to the requirements and to the courses offered. We have a central counselling centre for basic education and literacy in Austria. This includes an extensive database of basic educational offerings in Austria as well as the literacy hotline for Austria. This service centre has been in existence since 2006 and provides people wanting to attend courses with information on basic educational offerings – also for offerings from the ePSA network since 2020 – which are most suitable for the particular learning needs of the individual callers.

It is inter-institutionally and supra-regionally active and conducts around 120 consultations per month.

The experience of the advisors handling the calls to the literacy hotline has revealed a country-wide discrepancy between supply and demand in Austria. The average waiting period for a place in a course is 3–6 months; sometimes, people are even on the waiting list for 12 months. Immediate access to a course is basically not possible at the moment; yet it would often be needed, for instance when job offers are linked to reading and writing abilities or

to German language skills. This discrepancy is particularly apparent with regard to the type of courses offered. Some groups of people hardly have any chance at all of finding a course offered in Austria in the near future.

In general, this applies mostly to men, because many more courses are offered exclusively to women; and men are excluded from these. However, people coming from other EU Member States with other first languages are likewise affected; there are also few courses on offer for them. And it is particularly striking that there are almost no courses for all those people wanting to start learning how to read and write from the very beginning. Many course providers firmly exclude learning how to read and write from their programmes. And if someone wants to start learning how to read and write from the very beginning and has German as their first language or speaks German well, and has completed their schooling in Austria, then it is virtually impossible to find a suitable course for them.

Diverse needs of different target groups

The database of the central counselling centre contains many providers that only offer German as a second language. Some of the providers that offer German as a second language in addition to German as a first language exclude learning how to read and write from the very beginning. And then there are very, very few providers that offer learning how to read and write from the very beginning for those with German as their mother tongue. However, one can only speculate about the reasons for that at this point. It is really much more demanding and much more difficult to teach reading and writing from the very beginning, because it is just more complicated to impart knowledge in this case. It is difficult to find a homogeneous group of course participants who all want to start learning how to

read and write from the very beginning. The possibilities of offering heterogeneous groups are limited at most institutions and for many trainers due to the prevailing circumstances. And it is also difficult to reach people with German as their first language who cannot read or write at all. People with other first languages who cannot read or write can be contacted more easily via different communities. The high degree of difficulty in contacting certain groups results in lower numbers of participants from precisely these groups, which in turn makes it impossible to create homogeneous groups. This lack or low number of possibilities is met by a potential lack of willingness or need to offer heterogeneous groups. It is more tempting to offer homogeneous groups for people who can be reached easily. This is characteristic of the basic educational landscape and the offerings in Austria at present: Supply is high; there is a lot of supply; but there are unfortunately few or no offers and unacceptably long waiting times for some groups of people. There is great danger that these people will lose their interest in further education and will again move away from their intention of engage in the educational process.

In Austria, there is quite a large, regionally spread out, high-quality basic educational offering. It would be desirable to keep the focus on the diversity of the offering, and to have – or perhaps regain – an open-minded view of the target groups so that none of them are excluded as a result of course specifications which are too narrow.



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¹ See www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/Endversion_Curriculum_Basisbildung.pdf

How can life skills approach be incorporated into basic education and which methodical approaches would be beneficial?

From an idea to a programme

Looking at the development of the promotion of basic education in Austria, it is easy to recognise the transition from individual projects to a programme. Initially, only individual projects were supported, then there was a dedicated funding track – and now the basic education initiative is being realised. This path is – as is also the case for many other issues – a process that is organised very openly at first and increasingly develops into a standardised programme. A similar avenue could be adopted for the skills for life approach, in which an open style is selected initially that has few limitations and, above all, allows the breadth of access to be taken into consideration. As time moves on, dedicated programmes could then be organised, much like in basic education.

In terms of definitions, I prefer the WHO approach of defining life skills as abilities “that enable people to direct and organise their lives and to develop their capacity to live with the changes in their environment and effect changes themselves”.

One important thing to note here is that the basic intention of the skills for life approach – as indicated by the name – is for life skills to be seen as skills for coping with life and not be reduced to competences that can be directly utilised on the labour market. Initial signs are becoming apparent, as the approach has been incorporated into the overarching European Skills Agenda, which is primarily focused on promoting people’s ability to adapt.

Life skills in basic education – the approach of learn forever

So how can these skills be imparted effectively? In my opinion, basic education is a good option along with school-based education and vocational education. Life skills cannot be learned on an abstract basis. Therefore, these skills can best be integrated into basic education offerings as a cross-sectional task. After all, basic education focuses on developing precisely the skills that are encompassed by the skills for life approach. Learners examine their learning strategies, the curricula are oriented towards the participants’ lives, and digital skills are improved – to



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name just a few aspects. In addition, social participation is promoted.

At this point, I would like to describe the methodological aspects of the approach that we selected at learn forever: Learn forever is an expert network that has been dedicated to promoting the participation of educationally disadvantaged women in further education for over 20 years and particularly focuses on developing and piloting new teaching and learning methods and then making them available to the adult education community.

At **learn forever**, we primarily chose a methodical approach that strengthens people's competences. Life skills are seen as a cross-sectional area, so they are not the object but rather skills that are developed along with the content-based development of competences. So if learning is a reflective process, they also have to be made visible, thus allowing them to be reflected upon. Therefore, the abilities

of self-organisation, self-empowerment, the abilities to obtain and assess information, and belief in one's self-efficacy must be emphasised along with many other skills. It has become evident that the "flipped learning" method is particularly well suited to developing and strengthening these life skills. Flipped learning is essentially a backward classroom, if you will. Learning is turned on its head! In concrete terms, this means that, contrary to the usual learning process in which material is taught in the classroom and the learners practise the material at home, flipped learning encourages the learners to deal with a subject themselves. There is an individual learning phase and a classroom phase in which the learning is collectively reinforced and knowledge is exchanged in discussion processes. This allows learners to individually determine the learning material in line with their own pace, they can work on a subject more often and more intensively alone and then make sure that they understood the material and practise it later in the group phase.



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This method was developed in the USA and has generally been used more at the academic level up to now. At the learn forever expert network, we have adapted this method for the target group of educationally disadvantaged women. The participants work on a subject independently, with emphasis being placed on using a wide range of media. Digital skills are helpful here, and if the participants do not yet have them, they have to be acquired. We use worksheets, e-books, learning videos, and learning apps, to name only a few examples. While working with a subject independently, the participants learn to develop their own learning strategies, assess their knowledge, and also to describe things they did not understand or find incomprehensible. During the classroom phase, discussions take place about the learned material, questions are answered,

and the material is practised. Thus, the learned material is reinforced by way of mutual exchange and not in a defined process. Learning journals are kept in order to reflect on learning processes.

What have our experiences been like?

Life skills are developed throughout the entire learning process. Along with the basic skills, the participants have above all learned to acquire knowledge independently and transform it into ability through mutual practice. After completing this course, they were better able to assess challenges and felt capable of coping with them, they gained more courage, and the expectation of self-efficacy was further developed as a skill. At the same time, the

exchange with their classmates stimulated critical thinking and strengthened their communication skills, which was particularly evident when it came to adopting an opinion or stance and finding arguments to defend this position. Unfortunately, there are far too few learning materials to further pursue this exciting approach on a large scale. We have developed over 300 learning resources in our network alone. And also made a contribution to lifelong learning: Nearly every participant has discovered the joy of learning and wants to continue learning in the future.

What is needed

- Digital skills on the part of the learning coaches
- Sufficient resources because the current conditions within the framework of the basic education initiative leaves too little leeway for online learning offerings
- Confidence and trust
- Good balance between supporting and demanding
- Being excited to try new things

Overall, it is clear that this methodical approach makes a contribution to the implementation of the skills for life approach. We want to encourage other adult education institutions to become familiar with the flipped learning concept and use it themselves!



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Literacy for Life:

Using a cross government, cross-economy and cross-society approach to build stronger adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills are life skills that enable people to reach their full potential, be active and critical participants in society and help address poverty and social exclusion. Unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs have a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities. We believe literacy is a human right to which every member of society is entitled.

Defining literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills involve listening, speaking, reading, writing, using numbers and everyday technology to communicate, access services, build relationships, understand information and make informed choices.

The definition of literacy and 'literacies' are evolving as these skills and ways we use them are changing all the time. Take the past two years, for example, where we were faced with the COVID-19 pandemic and the new information and messaging we had to read, understand and act on.



Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in everyday life

© NALA, „Literacy for Life“, p. 56

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs in Ireland

In the most recent International Adult Skills Survey – Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – Ireland ranked in 17th place in adult literacy and 19th in adult numeracy out of 24 countries. Our results showed that:

- One in six (18%) of the adult population (aged between 16 and 65 years old) struggled with reading and understanding everyday text. For example, reading a bus timetable or medicine instructions.
- One in four Irish adults (25%) had difficulties using maths in everyday life. For example, basic addition, working out a bill or calculating averages.
- 42% of Irish adults struggled with basic digital tasks such as looking up a website or sending an email. A recent Cedefop survey showed that over half (55%) of the adult population has low digital skills.

Note that the majority of people who have digital literacy needs have underlying literacy issues.

Literacy and equality

Literacy is a human right to which every member of society is entitled. However only some members of our society have the literacy they need to flourish, thrive and reach their full potential.

Literacy is a barometer of equality and is the gateway to creating a society that is better and equal for all. At present, those who need to access education and training the most, benefit the least. This is the Matthew effect where “without intervention, those who have acquired more education get more and those that have not, get little or nothing.” Adult

literacy needs are rooted in education and wider systemic inequalities and we need to address this.

NALA believes that priority should be given to those most in need, the **furthest behind first**. This is a principle in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It means that where funding is limited, State investment should target those most in need. Within such a framework, **the needs of those with low or no education and less than a Level 4 qualification would be met first**. These adults are most at risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion in a changing world. Vulnerable adults, who cannot access supports or are refused help when they need it, may not seek help again. For the furthest behind first, there must be enhanced and targeted opportunities and supports for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning.

Supporting unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs

In 2019 in Ireland, 67,000 adults accessed local adult literacy services through the 16 local Education and Training Boards (SOLAS, 2020a). This is around 12% of those with unmet literacy needs. This includes adult literacy groups (including family literacy), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE), Skills for Work (basic skills programme for employees) and one-to-one voluntary literacy tuition. On average adults received between 2- and 6-hours tuition per week with some intensive options available.

In 2020, the world dealt with the pandemic of Covid-19. Ireland, like many other countries, went into ‘lockdown’ with initially literacy support stopping and then engaging online or over the phone until face-to-face learning resumed. In that year, the number of adults getting literacy

support decreased to 9,000. However, in 2021, the numbers increased again to 27,000.

Working together: the need for a coordinated approach

NALA works bi-laterally with many government departments and their agencies on policies aimed at building literacy, numeracy and digital literacy competence across a number of areas including health, community and finance. However, there is no coordination or alignment of this work across departments. Interdepartmental work that might happen often depends on the knowledge and goodwill of people working in different sections or areas.

UNESCO emphasises how countries need more policies and strategies that integrate literacy within a holistic, cross-sectoral, lifelong and life-wide perspective. NALA lobbied to bring all these departments and agencies together and take a whole-of-society and interdepartmental approach. This would allow for greater cohesion, bring opportunities for innovative development, enable people to share current and best practice and be more strategic and cost effective.

Advocating for change

The need for a coordinated central approach to be more effective, ambitious and strategic formed the basis for our lobbying efforts to our elected representatives and policy makers.

Political commitment

In February 2020, Ireland held a General Election to elect political representatives to the Dáil (parliament). Based on our policy and advocacy efforts, we managed to secure

commitments from five political parties¹ to supporting adult literacy and plain language in their manifestos during the election campaign.

In June 2020, three political parties formed a Coalition government – these were Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party. In the Programme for Government, there were commitments to:

- Develop and implement a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills within the first year of the Government.
- Introduce a plain language requirement for all public service communication, so that people can understand information the first time they read or hear it. Using plain language saves time and money and reduces mistakes and complaints. We will consult with NALA.

There was also an appointment of a new Minister with responsibility for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS).

Literacy for Life campaign: July 2020

NALA launched three publications: **Literacy Now**, **Literacy for Life** and **Literacy Impact** at a webinar in July 2020. These documents outlined the cost of unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills in Ireland; along with a Whole-of-Government framework for addressing these needs and an outcomes framework for measuring impact.

1. Literacy Now

Literacy Now examines key policy and practices in adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills and provides evidence to show why we must act now.

www.nala.ie/publications/literacy-now



Three publications “Literacy Now”, “Literacy for Life” and “Literacy Impact”

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2. Literacy for Life

This report was commissioned by NALA and written by the Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC). It advocates for an approach that connects adult literacy with the concept of ‘resilience’ and outlines a whole-of-government framework.

www.nala.ie/publications/literacy-for-life

3. Literacy Impact

Literacy Impact provides a framework for measuring the impact of improved literacy, numeracy and digital skills in Ireland. The report presents outcomes structured around eight domains and proposes sample indicators to measure evidence of impact.

www.nala.ie/publications/literacy-impact

We submitted the documents to relevant policy makers and met the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS), Simon Harris TD, to discuss them.



Domains wheel

© NALA, Literacy Impact, p. 21

Developing the 10-year strategy

On International Literacy Day, 8 September 2020, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS), Simon Harris, announced his plans to develop a new 10-year strategy for adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills for Ireland. The Minister gave SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, the responsibility to develop the strategy.

In October, the Minister set up and chaired an Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group on the 10-year strategy and NALA is a member of this group. NALA also

sat on a National Technical Advisory Committee to provide expert advice over the course of the strategy development period.

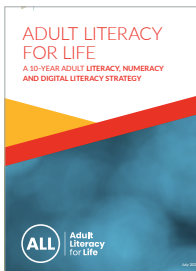
Consultation process

SOLAS prepared a consultation paper and invited submissions. During the consultation, SOLAS met 40 organisations, surveyed 1,100 people and 400 others participated in one to one meetings or focus groups. In May 2021, they published a summary report (SOLAS 2021b) on the consultation and a [detailed report](#) (SOLAS 2021c).²

NALA's vision and approach

NALA spent a number of weeks engaging with our members, students, staff and Board on what should be included in a new 10-year strategy. Our submission called for a **new vision and approach** for the next decade to support people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and prioritise the **furthest behind first**.³

Adult Literacy for Life: A 10-year Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy



On 8 September 2021, International Literacy Day, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS) launched the Government's first ever 10-year adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy strategy for Ireland⁴ (SOLAS (2021a)). This strategy is a cross

Government, cross-economy and cross-society approach to address evidenced unmet needs in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in the adult population in Ireland.

The Strategy proposes a vision of “An Ireland where every adult has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully engage in society and realise their potential.”

“We have to challenge the misconception that an inability to read, write or digitally communicate is a failure of the person. It is a failure of society and the State.”

“As an adult learner, I felt that I belonged, that I had ownership of my learning and that we were all equal.”

Simon Harris TD Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Martina Kiely, learner

The approach will be underpinned by five guiding principles, which will ensure a connected system in which no one is left behind.

<p>Equity</p> <p>To ensure everyone, regardless of gender, location, or other factors, has equitable access to literacy support.</p>	<p>Fairness</p> <p>To ensure fairness in the distribution of the potential benefits of literacy capacity development.</p>
<p>Openness</p> <p>To ensure decision making is open and that the voice of those most affected is involved in decision-making processes.</p>	<p>Accountability</p> <p>To ensure respective roles are clear; services are evidence informed, transparent, high quality and efficient.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p> <p>To improve economic, social and environmental systems to enable inclusive, productive and fulfilled lives.</p>	

ALL Strategy Guiding Principles, Adult Literacy for Life, p. 34

The strategy proposes an innovative, systems-based approach to literacy that works across Government, across economy, across society and across our communities. This involves coordinating resources, political leadership, national, regional and local focus along with a cross-government approach.

The Strategy proposes a range of commitments and actions across four pillars to ensure that:

1. people can UNDERSTAND their needs and where to go to meet them
2. they can ACCESS all of the learning and support they need
3. the learning and support available can EXPAND to meet this massive challenge; and
4. we EMPOWER people and communities to make a real difference to their lives.

There is more information about the strategy at the website: www.adultliteracyforlife.ie

Implementation of the strategy

In January 2022, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, chaired the first meeting of The Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy Implementation Group – a group tasked with driving literacy reforms. The Minister also announced that €3 million will be allocated for the implementation of the ALL Strategy in Budget 2022. NALA sits on the Implementation Group and we are eager to progress with the actions.

Conclusion

This is a very exciting time for adult literacy in Ireland. The 10-year strategy gives a shared vision, commitment and action plan to join forces and work together as Government (national and local), state agencies and organisations, employers, trade unions, civil society and communities to support unmet adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs over the next 10 years. NALA welcomes this strategy and is ready to play its part in achieving real positive change. We want to see greater supports for people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and prioritising the furthest behind first. This will help towards building an equal, resilient and happier society in Ireland.

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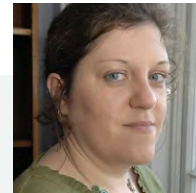
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- 2 www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/f/120607/x/647aad0349/all_strategy_summaryconsultationreport_final.pdf
- 3 See NALA Submission to the 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy for Ireland <https://www.nala.ie/publications/nala-submission-to-the-10-year-adult-literacy-numeracy-and-digital-literacy-strategy-for-ireland>
- 4 See www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/f/120607/x/133e8d1481/15607_all_strategy_web.pdf



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The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

NALA is the voice of adult literacy and numeracy in Ireland. We are a non-governmental organisation and registered charity in Ireland with nearly 2,000 members. We work to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs. We also support organisations to deliver a literacy-friendly service, where they are aware and take account of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and remove related barriers.

Green Deals for Communities

How can we address the climate crisis in a way that makes us feel motivated and empowered? What can we do collectively to shape sustainable change?

These questions are being addressed as part of the three-year, transnational Erasmus+ project “Green Deals for Communities” with partner organisations from Germany (SPES e.V. – Zukunftsmodelle für Menschen und Lebensräume [Models of the Future for People and Habitats]), Liechtenstein (CIPRA – Living in the Alps), and Austria (Climate Alliance Upper Austria and SPES future academy). The project’s main objective is to promote climate protection by implementing specific projects and measures at the local and regional levels – while at the same time linking them to the global context. Qualification measures in the field of adult education form the basis for this work.

Project description

“Think globally – act locally” – if we aim to achieve this objective and promote and advance the indispensable activities at the local level over and above the European Green Deal, we need a comprehensive qualification process for those who want to get involved in climate protection at the local level. To achieve this, the project involves designing a training course and using the course to train staff. As a result, staff from the partner organisations in Germany, Liechtenstein, and Austria will be qualified to serve as trainers for local climate protection initiatives, enabling them to work effectively and locally to protect the climate in a



© Pexels

global context. The structure and contents of the course will be outlined in a specially designed curriculum.

In addition, active citizens and community leaders in five pilot communities in the partner countries will be trained to independently implement climate-related projects at the community level in a participatory Green Deal process. The project entails forming so-called climate protection teams, which receive specific training on climate protection, project and team management, and self-organisation. A dedicated curriculum is also being designed in this context, with additional information about best-practice projects, a (digital) pool of experts and speakers, as well as information about funding and financing opportunities for projects relating to climate protection.

Furthermore, with the help of a specially developed software-supported Green Deal radar, citizens learn to analyse the current state of local climate protection in their

community in order to derive fields of action for all aspects of life. In coordination with community leaders, an action plan for specific implementation projects will be drawn up on the basis of this analysis. Initial measures will be realised during the project period under the supervision of the partner organisations. Following this, the climate protection teams will be in a position to carry out subsequent measures on their own initiative.

With the help of activities to raise awareness, the use of various forms of media (conventional and digital), as well as intensive public relations work in the pilot communities, the objective is to reach, sensitise, and motivate as many residents as possible to design every aspect of their daily lives in a climate-friendlier way. On top of that, international networking among the participating pilot municipalities is of major importance. Through multiplier events and the online format "Glocal Climate Talks", communities can exchange ideas and learn from partners in other countries.



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By forming tandem communities that are facing similar or, in some cases, contrasting challenges, the aim is to encourage an exchange of ideas in order to gain fresh, solutions-based perspectives on climate protection.

Already during its runtime, the project will attract a great deal of attention because of the direct participation of the citizens in the pilot communities and the dissemination across the community and climate protection networks of the consortium partners. Following the initial implementation of the Green Deal process, the format for qualification and participation can serve as a multipliable climate protection process and be applied to other communities. A handbook on the ideal process for the “Green Deals for Communities” project rounds out this Erasmus+ project and forms the basis for follow-up processes.

The Erasmus+ and EPALE conference

The “Green Deals for Communities” project was presented during the Erasmus+ and EPALE conference in March 2022 – with an emphasis on stimulating mobilisation and participation. Due to the acute need for action with respect to the climate crisis, this topic can trigger reaction patterns of fear, overwhelm, resistance, suppression, and similar in many people. For this reason, the question of how people can be mobilised for climate protection in a way that motivates and empowers them and brings them joy as they work together to shape the present and the future is of great importance – and is a core issue of the project. The project will design and experiment with approaches (attitudes, techniques, experiences, and so on) as a way to facilitate stimulating participation in the context of climate protection. This aspect was discussed with a group of participants at the Erasmus+ and EPALE conference where a number of approaches were identified.

Approaches to stimulating participation

One idea that is already being applied and tested as part of the “Green Deals for Communities” project is to take a playful approach to the topic. Using “environment games” from the field of education for sustainable development, for instance, simple (group) exercises and experiences allow participants to experience complex interrelationships first-hand. In this way, abstract issues can be brought from the level of rationality to the physical and emotional plane, where they can be understood and integrated.

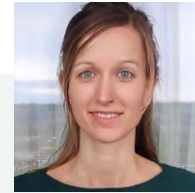
Theatre-based pedagogical approaches can also be useful for approaching this complex topic in a playful way. As such, the idea behind the “Climate Characters” role playing

exercise is to encourage participants to immerse themselves in different personas and the attitudes they take as a way to adopt and explore their perspectives and lines of reasoning in the discourse on climate change. This is meant to encourage dialogue among differing opinions and to reinforce one's own (argumentative) point of view (for example [klimartikulieren.at](https://www.klimartikulieren.at)).

In addition, digital media can also support efforts to engage people in the issue of climate protection. Online formats (such as [climatefresk.org](https://www.climatefresk.org)) are being tested as part of the project in order to make the connections between local actions and their effects on the global level (and vice versa) visible.

Furthermore, discussions during the Erasmus+ and EPALE conference highlighted the particular importance of informal learning settings for this topic: "Go outside and enjoy nature." This means that learning should also take place in nature (for example, outdoor education), to establish a direct relationship and a connection to our local habitat.

The importance of positive images of the future (such as [zukunftstapete.at](https://www.zukunftstapete.at)) was also addressed. In view of the weighty nature of the topic, it is important to generate motivating energy that makes people want to create and ultimately to get involved.



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Links

CIPRA – Living in the Alps: www.cipra.org
 SPES e.V. – Zukunftsmodelle: www.spes.de
 Climate Alliance Upper Austria:
oberoesterreich.klimabuendnis.at
 SPES future academy: www.spes.co.at

CUMILA: Curriculum Guide of media and information literacy for adults

CUMILA stands for “Curriculum Guide of media and information literacy for adults”. At the centre of the Erasmus+ project is a curriculum for teaching media and information literacy. This curriculum guide serves as a basis and orientation for setting up one’s own courses or organising self-study.

Digitalisation has arrived in all areas of our everyday lives and will continue to change our lives permanently. The further development of digital technologies has an influence on private and public life, as well as on the world of work. Digital solutions have become an integral part of everyday life. In addition to the many advantages and opportunities, however, the digital world also harbours risks and dangers. In the age of smartphones, social media, fake news and disinformation, it is essential to understand the functional principles and mechanisms of the internet and digital media.

All people must have the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge to strengthen their own core competencies required in the course of digitalisation. However, the required knowledge must first be identified. Therefore, at

the beginning of the CUMILA project, the following core question was posed: “What does an adult need to know nowadays in order to be able to move in the digital world in a self-determined and self-responsible way?”

Around this question, an extensive collection of knowledge on important core fields of digitalisation was created. For a better overview, the complex subject area was divided into a total of 6 independent modules. These are:

- Social Society & Digital Citizenship
- Communication and Collaboration
- Information Search and Opinion Formation
- Data Protection, Security and Privacy
- Technology and
- Families and Digital Media

For each of these topics there is a separate documentation in which all important knowledge and competences of the respective topic area are explained. The compiled knowledge is suitable for self-study as well as for use in the context of lesson preparation or for the creation of own teaching materials.

CUMILA provides a guideline for building a curriculum for teaching media and information literacy to adults. Each of the 6 thematic modules consists first of all of a



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eLearning

- Online course for teachers
- Support in learning the topics
- „Ready to teach“ quizzes
- No registration required

Moodle course

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comprehensive manual that gives an overview of the most important contents and imparts the necessary knowledge. Interested parties can read more about individual topics here and get an overview. The manual is suitable for self-study or as part of lesson preparation. Based on this, a set of teaching materials and learning units is available for each module, as well as an overarching curriculum that serves as a template for planning your own teaching units and content. The curriculum defines the necessary knowledge and competences to reach a certain level of digital maturity.

The accompanying learning units and teaching materials, in turn, are organised online in a wiki system. At wiki.cumila.eu, in addition to time specifications and instructions for the teacher, the corresponding worksheets and further information can be downloaded.

All materials are freely available. Teachers and people in the field of education can use them to organise their own teaching units. The exercises can also be used independently of the underlying CUMILA curriculum.

Last but not least, CUMILA offers interactive e-learning in the form of a Moodle course. This guides interested parties in familiarizing themselves with the individual topics and leads them step-by-step through the CUMILA materials and the corresponding knowledge areas. For teachers, there is also a short test for each chapter to test their own knowledge.

CUMILA is for everyone. Teachers in the field of vocational and adult education will find the necessary content to design their own learning units. Interested people will find enough material to acquire the necessary knowledge on their own. And because parents face special challenges in raising their children, CUMILA offers a separate module exclusively for parents. All content of the project is freely available and usable. Those who wish can even publish their own learning materials via the system and make them available to others. And anyone who wants to know more can reach the project at the email address info@cumila.eu.

Information about the association

The Media Competence Team from Karlsruhe sees itself as a start-up aid for children and young people, parents and schools. The association offers lectures, training courses and workshops with the aim of raising awareness of the correct use of media and promoting the skills required in the course of digitalisation.

www.medienkompetenz.team

INSERT – List of helpful tools

As part of the CUMILA project, the project consortium also looked at a number of helpful tools and applications that take work off our hands in the context of media production and information management. The list includes a number of software and online solutions from a wide range of areas with a short description and an initial assessment of usability under the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

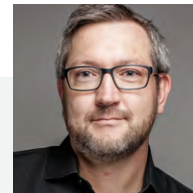
<http://wiki.cumila.eu:8080/xwiki/bin/view/List%20of%20helpful%20tools/>



CUMILA Logo

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CUMILA is a joint project of the Medienkompetenz Team e.V. (Germany), the Academy for Civic Education and Democracy Leadership (Austria) and the Centre for Innovation and Development of Education and Technology, CIDET (Spain). The project has been implemented under the ERASMUS+ programme of the European Union and all materials are free to use. The project is also open to all, so you are welcome to actively participate in the project yourself.
<https://cumila.eu>



© Daniel Nübling

Daniel Nübling has worked in the IT industry for over 25 years and is also an external data protection officer for medium-sized companies. He appreciates the benefits of the digital world, but is also aware of the associated challenges (especially for parents). Since 2018, he has been involved with the Medienkompetenz Team e.V. (Media Competence Team) and teaches children, young people and adults about the opportunities and risks of the digital world and supports them in dealing with the new possibilities.

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#FLIGHT: Financial Literacy for Investment, Growth, Help, and Teamwork

Why do we need financial literacy?

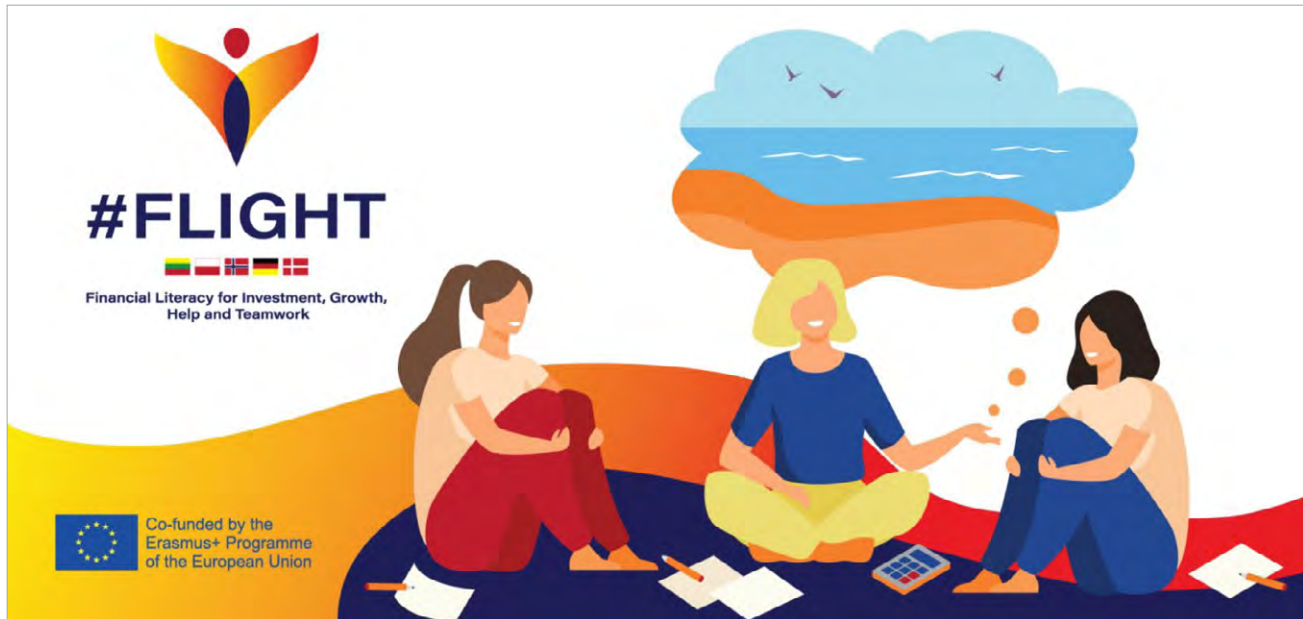
Do you think everyone should possess the competencies needed to make good and sustainable financial decisions in life? The answer is sure, yes. However, this might be a more modern notion than one might think.

In the western world, throughout history, the people who needed to possess specific knowledge about finances were those in possession of money. They were very few and overwhelmingly male. The poor also managed money, but in an administrative way: how to make it last for survival. The rich learn skills related to how to maintain and grow wealth.

In the 20th century under Soviet occupation, for example, people had scarce opportunities to purchase property, so when an occasion arose there was little consideration involved, people simply jumped at the opportunity. During this time, people did not need to invest in retirement funds

either, as pension was paid by the state, but they did develop money-saving practices which they maintained until today. A consequence of this setup is that people from post-soviet areas are more skeptical to invest in things with a high-value fluctuation such as gold, art, or securities. Another consequence is the fact that while money is being saved, it is very rarely invested or grown, oftentimes not even being kept in a bank account that can generate a small positive interest.

Today, people from countries that have been under soviet occupation form the biggest economic migrant group in Europe. The European countries hosting the migrations possess significant structural differences from those of the original counties. Digital financial tools are still a source of concern and fear for many, and economic migrants often choose investments that can be grasped and made easier to understand, e.g. real estate or low-interest bank deposits.



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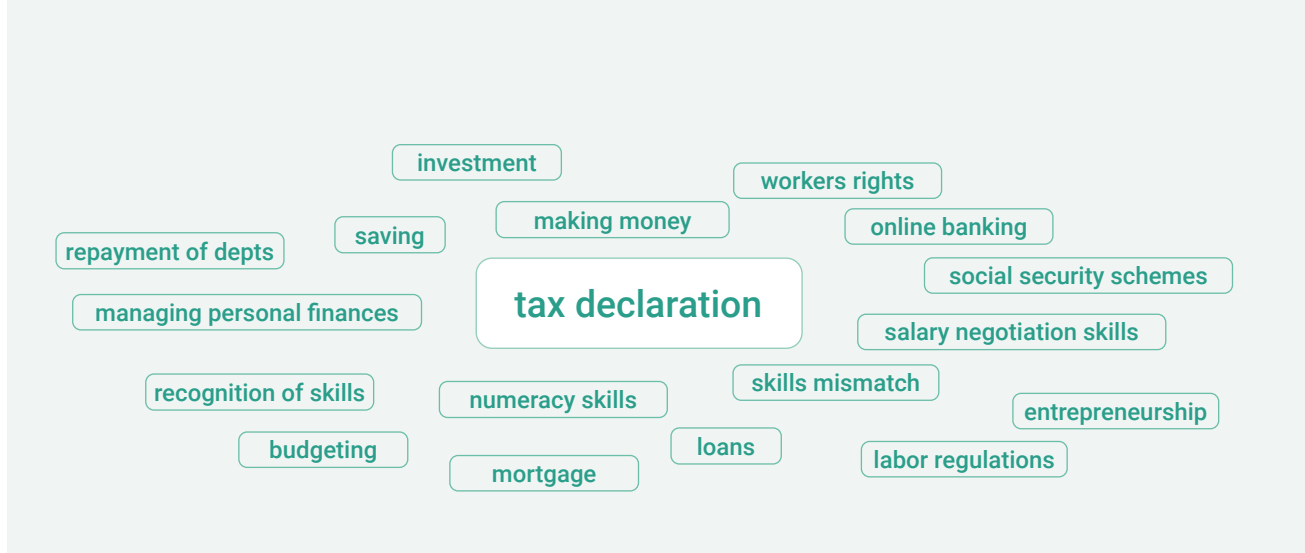
Financial literacy today

Going back to my initial question, everyone should possess financial literacy because times have changed. According to the *Journal of Pension Economics and Finance*¹, the increase in life expectancy alone has changed the game of retirement, and people are required to invest early on in retirement plans and additional pension schemes to be able to maintain a similar lifestyle. Sociological factors like living in a foreign country, away from family, increase the need for financial resilience. Technology allows positive opportunities by facilitating access to information, banking, investment schemes, etc., but it can also pose a threat.

Phishing, hacking, romance fraud, and unauthorized use of data are only a few examples of technology-driven threats.

Enter #FLIGHT

As the OECD study “Addressing women’s needs for financial education”² points out, digital and financial literate women are more skilled, resilient, and self-confident, therefore more successful in securing a safe and sustainable financial future for themselves, their children, and families, and reducing their poverty risk. From their experience working with expatriate women, five European organizations aim to provide Eastern European female expatriates with



Word cloud

digital finance skills (DLS) for their better socio-economic inclusion in host communities, effective self-employment, financial independence as well as sustainable saving and investment patterns in Digital Age.

#FLIGHT integrates both state-owned and private educational institutions that will develop:

1. Training material on “DLS for personal needs and/or self-employment of female economic migrants” based on topics that are vital for efficient socio-economic inclusion of migrants into host societies, e. g. saving, personal finance planning, distinctions between wishes and needs, taxation, banking operations, accountancy, invoicing, self-employment formalization, etc., with a special focus on digital aspects.
2. © Online Personal Risk Tolerance Test. Based on scientific theories of risk tolerance management, it will include various numerical and interactive situations in videos/pictorial format. The tool will help with understanding how much risk an investor (female participant) can assume.

3. © Romance Fraud Simulation Tool. With spam fraud on the rise, this tool will help target female expatriates understand the fraudulent practices and the risks they convey, as well as how to avoid them.
4. Help Clubs will be created in the form of a female network for serving female expatriates with their emotional needs for friendship and communion as well as for piloting the #FLIGHT’s intellectual outputs in an encouraging and safe environment.

The #FLIGHT partnership was invited to present the project at the Austrian Erasmus+ and EPALE Conference 2022. The Danish partner represented by Diana Medrea-Mogensen, together with the project coordinator Versli Mama from Lithuania represented by Skaidre Vainikauskaite-Tomaseviciene introduced the project to the audience and picked their brain regarding what financial skills and knowledge they think everyone should possess for their full participation in everyday life. The results and ideas from the audience can be seen in the word cloud on top.

It is worth noting that this insight confirms the need for the type of content and activities the #FLIGHT project is developing. With “Tax declaration” being the most voted answer, it points out the importance of providing tools and material for people to master the topic of taxation. This has even greater importance for expatriates that are completely foreign to the tax system of the host country.

The #FLIGHT project is in its initial stages with Help Clubs being formed in the partner countries Norway, Denmark, Germany, Poland, and Lithuania. Given the staggering increase in the target group caused by the ongoing war in Ukraine, the consortium hopes to support refugees in their integration through the Help Clubs.

For more information about #FLIGHT, visit <https://flight-women.eu>



Diana Medrea-Mogensen founded We Are Entrepreneurs with the scope of providing courses, coaching, and developing educational programs on the topic of entrepreneurship. The goal is to provide access to non-formal entrepreneurial training to at-risk segments of society and facilitate labor market integration through self-employment. The education focused on problem-solving, financial literacy, and service mindset is the key to a more inclusive, balanced, and sustainable world.

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The description of #FLIGHT is based on the project application written by Skaidre Vainikauskaite-Tomaseviciene (Versli Mama)

Links

- 1 see Annamaria Lusardi and Olivia S. Mitchell: Financial literacy around the world: An overview. In: Journal of Pension Economics and Finance 2011 Oct; 10(4): 497–508. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5445931
- 2 https://www.oecd.org/daf/fin/financial-education/OECD_INFE_women_FinEd2013.pdf

RESET: Basic education as both risk and opportunity

As an organisation that has been active in adult education for over three decades, at Orient Express' Learning Centre we perceive education first and foremost as an opportunity to expand personal agency, strengthen self-efficacy and autonomy, and build positive relationships. At the same time, education also risks reinforcing exclusion and marginalization when it fails to create a safe space, when negative learning demands and coercion prevail, when it neglects to value personal learning paces and achievements, reinforcing self-doubt and fear of failure.

While this applies to all areas of education, starting with elementary education, from formal, non-formal to informal learning, we address this topic from the particular perspective of non-formal basic education, as the focus of our work lies in this area. Adult learners with basic education needs belong to the most marginalised groups in society, often facing economic, social and/or racial discrimination. In addition, many participants in basic education courses have recently experienced war, flight and violence. Insecure life situations, personal losses, a precarious residence status and negative learning prerequisites discriminate against educationally disadvantaged people in several ways.

Violence and discrimination potentially cause serious states of stress and tension, trauma, chronic illness and lowered self-esteem, which have a negative impact on concentration and motivation to learn. While these specific challenges require sensitive solutions, it is equally important to avoid victimisation and paternalism. Learners are powerful actors who have already overcome great difficulties and have the opportunity to positively influence their physical and mental well-being and avoid chronic stress.

A critical understanding of resilience

With this in mind, together with European partners who shaped the project from their respective expertise – CSC Danilo Dolci in Palermo, KMOP in Athens, VHS Pankow in Berlin – we addressed the issue of resilience in the Erasmus+ project RESET: Building Resilience in Basic Education (2019–2022).

The term resilience, which nowadays has become much of a buzzword, is found in many fields such as ecology, psychology, sociology, health care and education. It was first introduced in the 1970s to depict the ability of ecosystems to recover from disasters. In social sciences, however, resilience describes the ability of an individual, community or society to successfully cope with significant change, adversity or risk.

The starting point for research on resilience by pioneers such as Emmy Werner (Werner et al 1971, Werner 1998) and Aaron Antonovsky (1997) was the question of how people can pursue their personal goals and lead a contented life despite the most adverse circumstances such as severe trauma or social exclusion, violence, social injustice, disadvantaged educational opportunities, etc.



artistic design
© Lena Knilli

While research on resilience often starts from experiences in childhood and adolescence, it is assumed that protective mechanisms can be fostered and built up across a person's lifespan.

From our focus on basic education and work against sexism and racism, we highlight a critical understanding of resilience: Discrimination, disadvantage, violence or even trauma are embedded in social processes that we must not forget in the discussion. It would be dangerous to think that it is the task of people affected by discrimination to simply



Practising writing numbers as part of mathematical competence development

© Lena Knilli

“work on themselves” to make their situation more bearable. Racism, sexism, class and educational discrimination among others are embedded in social processes that should not be excluded from the discussion. Resilience must not be understood as self-optimisation, but as a form of self-empowerment that enables individuals to deal with challenges in the best possible way. Educational disadvantage and the resulting basic educational needs should not be seen as an individual problem, but rather addressed and combated at the level of society as a whole. Rather, we understand resilience as a process of self-empowerment that enables individuals to deal with challenges in the best possible way.

RESET: Building Resilience in Basic Education

Against this background, RESET aimed to foster resilience in the field of basic education in order to broaden the scope of action of both adult learners and trainers. Together with European partners, we developed four results, which we would like to briefly present at the end of this article: The development of a methodological framework was the starting point for all further activities. Trainers were involved in the development of the findings through qualitative and quantitative research to analyse the challenges they face in their daily work and to take into account their perspectives and needs. We particularly emphasise the importance of including trainers as a target group when it comes to promoting resilience in adult education, since both participants and trainers engage in the co-construction of a safe learning environment. As adult educators, we need to find strategies in our daily work that enable us to deal constructively with challenges and to find individually appropriate strategies for our own regeneration in order to be able to rely on optimism, humour and hope ourselves (Hantke/Görge 2019, Busch-Geertsema 2019).

RESET subsequently developed and tested learning materials based on narratives and creative approaches. A curriculum contains 20 lessons based on resilience stories; its activities link resilience to core competencies of basic education, such as literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, active citizenship, labour market inclusion, etc. Trainers can rummage through our toolbox offering 80 resilience-building exercises, choosing from an appropriate level of difficulty, several basic education competences covered and the resilience area(s) defined in the project: Emotions, Affects and Feelings, Body Awareness and Stress Management,

Self-Assessment and Solution Orientation, Social Skills and Relationships, Developing Creativity, and Resources and Self-Efficacy.

Last but not least, the e-learning platform (<https://reset-eu.net>) gathers online pedagogical resources, podcasts and numerous tutorials on the importance of resilience for basic education. Learners find quizzes that link language and listening comprehension skills with digital literacy.

To conclude, RESET did not aim at shifting adult educators' professional understanding towards resilience trainers or even trauma pedagogues. Rather, it aimed at the co-construction of a safe learning environment in which appreciation, reliability and autonomous decisions in the learning process prevail.

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Erasmus+ FINANZFIT project partnership publishes teaching material for the acquisition of basic financial skills

Young people are often faced with the challenge that, although they acquire important skills in subjects such as maths, German, chemistry, and geography while in school, formal training in the responsible management of one's own financial resources is generally not provided.

Yet, particularly during the transition from school into one's professional life, it is tremendously important to maintain an overview of, and control over, one's personal finances.

Besides indispensable expenses on, for instance, one's own car or on necessary insurance policies, young people are exposed to adverts for mobile phones, streaming services, online shops, and smartphone apps from an early age. So one's first pay cheque is often spent more quickly than originally intended.

How much can I spend on my hobby? How does a current account work? And what is an IBAN? What is interest and what do I receive it for? How can I take out a loan? What should I be insured against? Why should I even save money? How can I invest my savings wisely? These are just some of the questions that young people ask themselves in this connection.

The ERASMUS+ partnership known in short as Finanzfit (Basic Economic Training for European Adults), coordinated by German chamber of crafts and skilled trades Westdeutscher Handwerkskammertag (WHKT), has made it its objective to create an independent and market-neutral range of information for young people that is free of charge. The tools that are developed in the project shall serve, in particular, to convey basic financial knowledge and to support the development of the skills required for financial decisions.

Eight project partners from various European countries therefore took up the challenge of preparing the topics of financial assets, financing, insurances, liquidity, current account, and retirement planning in a manner suitable for the target group. During the course of the project, the partners therefore worked out various outputs that are designed for use by educators at general and vocational schools. One significant result of the work from the past two and a half years is the teaching material to be used by educators that was developed in a pedagogical-didactical manner. The teaching material comprises six learning units, each consisting of around five lessons in the aforementioned Finanzfit topics, plus an additional learning unit that can be used for internal differentiation. In addition to this educational material, the project portfolio includes a multilingual, multimedia website with an e-learning platform where the learners can playfully apply, test, and broaden their acquired knowledge on their own.

Besides this, the project partners have also developed and published two Finanzfit magazines oriented towards the target group. These supplement and cover the previously mentioned Finanzfit topics in an entertaining manner while implementing a cross-media approach.



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The target-group-specific project outputs are also complemented by means of a handbook for teaching staff. This contains valuable tips for conveying the Finanzfit topics in a manner that is appropriate for the target group when teaching. It also delves into online teaching events as an alternative form of classic face-to-face instruction. All project outputs are available free of charge in the project languages of German, English, Turkish, Greek, Italian, and Swedish via the project website www.whkt.de/finanzfit.



© unsplash.com/Scott Graham

About the Erasmus+ FINANZFIT project

This initiative was financed with the support of the European Commission. Partners of the Westdeutscher Handwerkskammertag (WHKT) for this project were Europe Unlimited e.V. (Germany), VondiConsulting (Austria), Scuola Costruzioni Vicenza Andrea Palladio (Italy), Datça İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü (Turkey), European Institute for Local Development (Greece), Mobilizing Expertise (Sweden), and Euro-Net (Italy).



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Invisible talents & Dreamlike Neighbourhood: Fostering social participation among senior citizens and making it visible

“Everyone has something to give, and everyone can contribute to the community – age has nothing to do with it.”

Older people and the very old are often “invisible” within society today. They have left the workforce, they aren’t out and about as much, and they’re underrepresented in the media as well. The older a person becomes, the less he or she is expected to contribute to society and to participate in society in a meaningful way.

Through our projects, we seek to foster the understanding that older people, with their diverse interests, abilities, and talents, can play an active and self-determined role in society. Together with partners from different countries, with varied professional backgrounds and personal approaches, we have developed and realised projects in recent years that expand the scope of action and the opportunities for participation among older and very old people and that provide support for them to live as long as possible in an independent, healthy, safe, and familiar environment. Through our work, we aim to contribute not only to the (self-)empowerment of older women and men, but to the age(-ing)-appropriate design of the social and the physical environments as well.

Why do we believe that older people should (re)discover their “talents”, connect with others, and work together to shape their environment and their communities? Here are a few select facts:

We’re living longer.

On 1 January 2019, one in five residents of the European Union was aged 65 or over. By 2100, about one third of all Europeans will be 65+. The group consisting of the very old (80 years and older) is growing faster than any other age group. Between 2019 and 2100, the proportion of people in the European Union aged 80+ will climb from 5.8 to 14.6 per cent.

Many of us would like to grow old at home.

“Ageing in place” means spending the life stage of old age at home, in familiar surroundings – and doing so as independently as possible. This concept not only cuts costs by reducing the need for care facilities, it also makes people happier. Both political leaders and older people themselves prefer this way of life because it is associated with relationships, continuity, social connectedness, as well as security and familiarity. The home is a place of retreat, the community a valuable resource.¹

Belonging and social cohesion are vital resources.

When belonging and cohesion in the community are valued and nurtured, they become a precious resource in old age. They enhance the quality of life in old age², promote health³, and prevent and alleviate loneliness while prolonging life⁴.

Two projects – two different approaches to fostering social participation among older people:



Dream Factory participant shows her dream collage

© Caro Bonink

invisible talents

“Thank you for asking about talents. That’s normally something no one is interested in. Now that I’m talking about it, I just realised how much I like that.”

Participant in the Netherlands

Objectives and target groups

The Erasmus+ project invisible talents (October 2018–September 2020) was aimed at supporting older people in (re) discovering their talents and sharing them with others, while inspiring key individuals and organisations to open up space for these talents.

Through this project, we primarily addressed employees and volunteers from health and social service providers and civic initiatives working actively with and for older people. In five partner countries (Austria, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Italy), project teams worked with organisations and communities to initiate and implement “little activities” intended to increase the visibility of and appreciation for older people. A wide variety of activities have been developed, ranging from one-off interventions to longer-term cooperation projects with older people and an organisation’s staff:

Small steps – big impact: results from the *invisible talents* project

The Dream Factory workshop series was created in the Modestraat cultural and community centre in Amsterdam, during which the older participants explored their aspirations and dreams and visualised them through a variety of activities. Our partners in Germany, Italy, and Lithuania collaborated with staff and older people in senior clubs and senior residences to develop ideas on how to focus more attention on the talents of older people in the institutions. In the spring of 2020, when COVID-19 brought every form of public life and communal activity to a standstill, older people found themselves confronted with the image of the “vulnerable high-risk group” on a massive scale. To counter that image and other discriminatory stereotypes, queraum launched the video series “Daheimbleiben für Fortgeschrittene” (Staying Home for Advanced Learners). In videos, older and very old people reveal their zest for life and sense of humour and illustrate how – with creativity and joie de vivre – people can have a good time at home too.

Dreamlike Neighbourhood

“I want to help others wherever possible, but I also want to help myself. I want to savour life and not waste it.”

Participant from the Czech Republic



Storytelling Café in Prague

© Letokruh, z.ú., Tschechien

Objectives and target groups

In the Erasmus+ project Dreamlike Neighbourhood (December 2020 – November 2022), we support neighbourhood groups of older and very old people. They meet regularly in these groups, get to know each other (in a different way), and build each other up. Together they form a support network that helps them meet the challenges of daily life, and they play an active role in transforming neighbourhoods.

“Because together it’s more fun”: Implementation and experiences thus far

“It is great to see how the participants have grown and developed. The participants have bonded with each other and are curious about new things in the neighbourhood and about each other.”

Project partner from the Netherlands

In recent months, senior citizens’ groups have been established in the partner countries (Czech Republic, Slovenia, Netherlands, and Austria). During regular “chats” on a variety of topics (such as childhood memories and travel) in a Viennese pensioners’ club, group members hear about, see, and appreciate commonalities, differing perspectives, and personal experiences. The Letokruh neighbourhood group in Prague explores different parts of the city, discovering new things in their own neighbourhoods and contributing their perspectives in discussions with urban planners and other experts. Participants in AFEdemy’s neighbourhood groups in The Hague organise each of their meetings according to their interests and talents. Self-penned poems

and drawings are just as much a part of the discussion as health-related topics and personal concerns. The Third Age University's neighbourhood group in Ljubljana addresses the age(-ing)-friendly design of the public space and was invited to create a video for the City65+: Between recreation and urbanity exhibition.

Overall, the meetings provide a useful framework for getting to know other people, discussing various aspects of good neighbourliness, and experimenting with creative methods and formats that encourage togetherness.

Publications and links

The fact sheet, the handbook, the compilation of methods, and the video series "Daheimbleiben für Fortgeschrittene" (Staying Home for Advanced Learners) can be found on the invisible talents project website: www.invisible-talents.eu

You can find further information and a fact sheet on the Dreamlike Neighbourhood project here: www.dreamlike-neighbourhood.eu

A handbook and a compilation of methods will be published in the summer of 2022.

Further projects by the queraum team are outlined on the website: www.queraum.org



@ Jacqueline Godany

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Blended und Flipped Learning in basic education: Applying the flipped course method as an integrative education offering

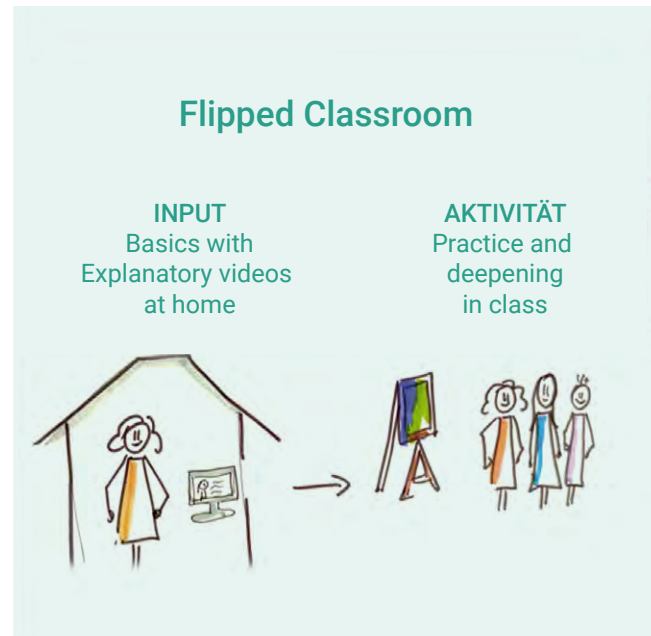
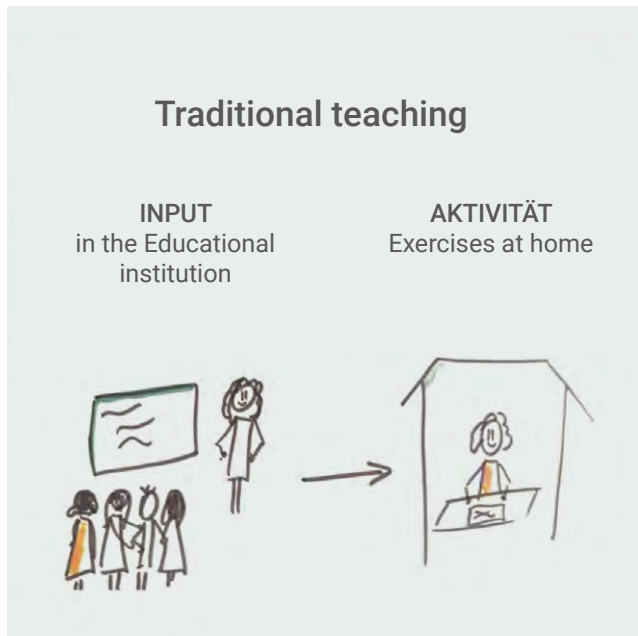
In recent decades, digitalisation has had a tremendous impact on the way the education sector has evolved. Concepts such as online teaching and e-learning have emerged. The continuing advancement of computer technology and the rapid pace of Internet use provide the technical basis for various forms of e-learning, including the concept of blended learning. Flipped learning or flipped classroom is one part of this model.

What is flipped learning?

Flipped learning or flipped classroom refers to a teaching method developed by Bergmann and Sams in the United States in 2007. The core idea was that of simply turning traditional teaching upside down:

Since that time, there have been a number of further iterations on the original concept, including flipped learning. Accordingly, the concept of flipped learning is rooted in the field of e-learning. The following diagram illustrates how the concept of flipped learning fits into the overarching structure of blended learning (integrated learning) and e-learning.

Flipped courses are seminars, courses, or workshops that employ a flipped classroom design. Flipped course can only be used as a way of contributing to the diversity of methods and media or as an integrated teaching concept. Until now, flipped learning as a pedagogical method has primarily been applied in the school and university con-



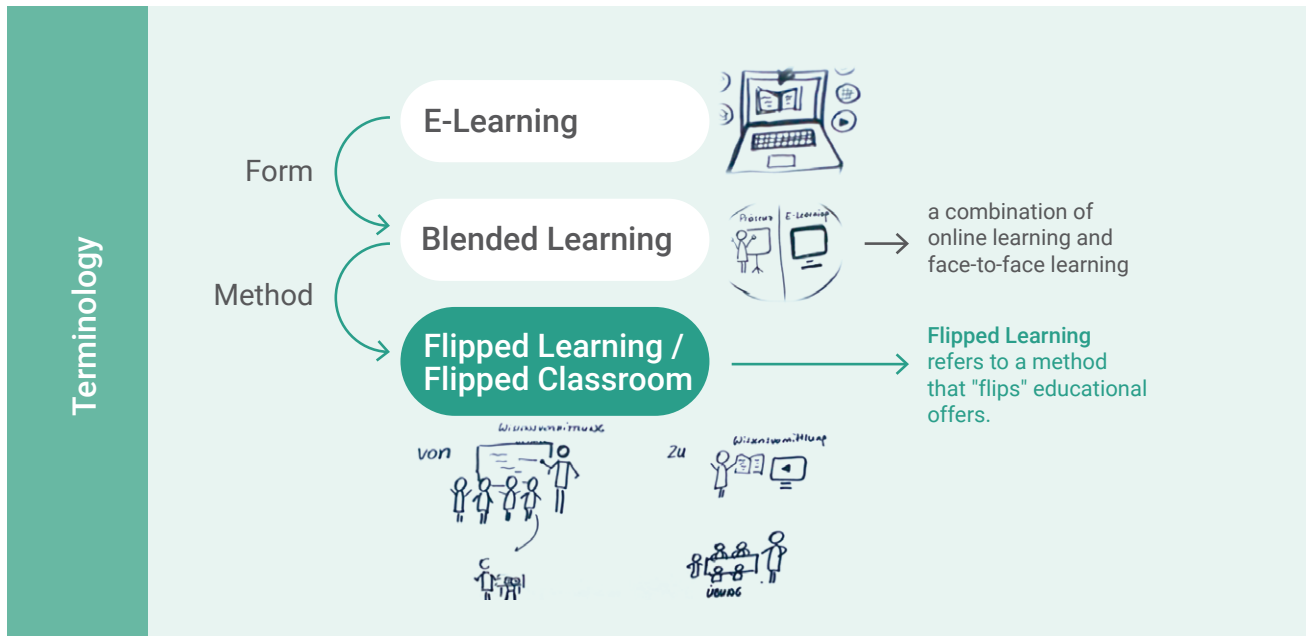
The concept of the flipped classroom

© illustration: Verein Bildung und Lernen

text. In the process of further developing the educational offers in the domain of basic education as well as specific educational offers for educationally disadvantaged women within the scope of the learn forever network project, this innovative method has now been applied to women with basic education needs in the form of integrative educational offers.

The “modular learning arrangements” model developed in learn forever and implemented as part of the Adult Education Initiative, the innovative models for teaching in basic education and literacy from the “In Bewegung” (In Motion) project, basic education courses offered within the organi-

sation, e-learning best practices, as well as the digital skills of the project partners provided the technical foundation. Under consideration of internal quality standards, basic education requirements, as well as the requirements for e-learning offerings, the learn forever network modelled two course offerings, along with developing teaching and learning materials tailored to the target group and applicable for flipped learning. The models and the materials were tested in a flipped course format, both as an integrated concept of teaching units as well as a means of contributing to methodological diversity in the form of flipped learning sequences.



Contextual placement of flipped learning

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To conceptualize a flipped course, the group first analyzed and compared different flipped classroom concepts and studied national expert platforms, technical literature, and best practices. The appropriate and established models were adapted and combined. This resulted in the following two model descriptions or curricula:

- Virtual (integrative) basic education course
- Flipped learning arrangement

For more information, please visit:

www.learnforever.at/unsere-methoden

The development work was characterised by innovation, flexibility, digitalisation, and a motivation to learn on the part of all those involved. The following process steps provide a broad description of how the flipped courses were implemented:

1. Developing digital competence
2. Using learning management systems
3. Learning to learn – learning with videos
4. Introduction to flipping (in-class flip)
5. "Flipping" the self-learning phase (acquisition, resources for learning, and so on)
6. Attendance phase (immersion, projects, and so on)
7. Reflection

The educational offerings that were developed were repeatedly piloted, and suitable self-developed learning resources were made available for use in a virtual setting in basic education, which the learners accessed under their own direction and in other types of media.

What is flipping's added value for learners?

- Promotes digital skills
- Fosters self-directed learning skills
- Reinforces the capacity for self-organisation
- Promotes the ability to reflect on one's own learning processes
- Boosts beliefs about self-efficacy

All of the resources for learning are compiled in the toolbox that can be accessed at www.learnforever.at and www.alphabetisierung.at. They are made available as open educational resources in compliance with the terms of use (CC-BY licence).

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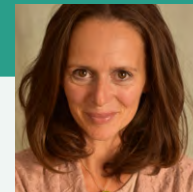
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Silke Jamer-Flagel has been developing resources for learning and facilitating learning processes in the learn forever network of experts since 2019. During and after her studies in economics at the Alpe-Adria University in Klagenfurt, she worked in media consulting and personnel marketing before specialising in the areas of growth mindset, learning motivation, and online learning. As an e-learning expert, she is passionate about developing and implementing new and innovative concepts in education.

Enhancement in psychosocial life skills

“Finding security within oneself by building a stable personality.”

The Erasmus+ “Basic Psychosocial Education” project addressed the question of how people can regard themselves as self-confident and self-efficacious individuals despite facing adverse circumstances.

Developments in society provide the impetus for the “Basic Psychosocial Education” project

Our reality is increasingly defined by complexity, acceleration, and greater efficiency. The course of life is taking trajectories that are steadily becoming less reliable and predictable. Many people are overwhelmed and exhausted by the expanding range of options and choice points, coupled with increasing disruptions in their personal and professional lives. As a consequence of life’s shifting realities, emotional stress is on the rise, together with an increasing incidence of diagnosed mental illness. The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged as this project was under way, exposed even more starkly the pressures people face, as well as the constraints and potential they have to cope with them.

Educators and lecturers working in adult education are hence called upon to develop new offerings and formats that contribute more effectively to preventing these problems. Ultimately, when people are equipped with psychosocial skills, they are able to delve into social and cultural arenas and help shape them, to assume responsibility and practice self-care.

Strategic partnership for sharing good practices

From 2018–2021, five European adult education institutions grappled with the issues surrounding the changing realities people are facing in their lives and the resulting psychosocial pressures as part of the Erasmus+ Basic Psychosocial Education project. The project partners developed a concept of basic psychosocial education that can be applied in adult education to help people cope with these challenges using a preventive approach. Alongside St. Virgil Salzburg (Austria), the participating institutions included the Volkshochschule Salzburg (Austria), the Bremer Volkshochschule (Germany), the Bildungshaus Kloster Neustift (Italy), and the VHS Bildungsinstitut Eupen (Belgium).

Life skills in the twenty-first century

The central basis of the Basic Psychosocial Education project, BPE for short, is a description of the current life circumstances in connection with one's own life skills. Drawing on this basic analysis, the project participants developed an ideal model for a "strong personality" in psychosocial terms. Under the main pillars of "Thinking", "Feeling", "Desiring", and "Acting", the group identified attitudes and skills that can be expected to enhance a person's resilience and mental health. While this is significant on the level of the individual, given the financial implications of rising mental illnesses, it has socio-political relevance as well.

Thinking

1. A strong personality examines its own thought patterns and convictions and stands by them after thorough scrutiny.
2. It is open to differing views, accepts new stances and the plurality of interpretations, and integrates other perspectives into its own thinking.
3. It takes a broad view and identifies interrelationships, interactions, and mid- and long-term consequences

Feeling

1. A strong personality perceives, reflects, and articulates its own emotional state and its biographical progression.
2. It empathises with other people and distances itself from inappropriate emotions.
3. Its compassion extends beyond the social milieu to the natural environment and to future generations (posterity).

Acting

1. A strong personality acts decisively and flexibly and takes a solutions-oriented approach to challenges.
2. It is capable of non-action and abstinence wherever this appears warranted.
3. Constructive, communicative, and cooperative action is the hallmark of this type of personality.

Desiring

1. A strong personality is guided by well founded values.
2. Its thinking, feeling, and acting are borne by a sense of personal and social responsibility.
3. Respect (consideration), tolerance, and decency are intrinsic to this personality.

Finding security within oneself by building a stable personality

In summary, basic psychosocial education is a preventive approach to bolstering life skills. It promotes people's ability to self-direct in social contexts, supports their sense of personal responsibility, and provides opportunities to develop a personal orientation system. It aims to support people's (mental) health, to promote equal (health) opportunities, and to encourage people to participate in society. Basic psychosocial education is also based on the triad of education, counselling, and guidance. It opens up "resonant spaces of learning", "encounter zones", and "workshops of success and failure". It works on the basis of resources, engages the target groups, and incorporates forms of self-directed and informal learning. It devotes a great deal of attention to the transfer of learning.

Basic psychosocial education – a pedagogical action plan

Based on the realities, the growing lack of orientation, the urge to self-optimize, and the accelerated pace of life, the project partners formulated a definition of basic psychosocial education as a field of action within adult education:

- Providing guidance to people from a holistic perspective of the person
- Acquiring, maintaining, and expanding the basic life skills of responsible personal conduct and constructive social interaction
- The availability of (actionable) knowledge around issues of personal development and crisis management (psychoeducation)
- A range of offerings that are accessible to all target groups and sectors of society

- A learning offer that incorporates the pedagogical, psychological, and neurobiological principles of knowledge and competence acquisition

In addition to the theoretical foundation, the project team designed and implemented new formats. Secondly, they developed strategies and tools to ensure and safeguard the quality of the basic psychosocial education offerings. This resulted in a framework for quality and a description of what successful learning entails. Furthermore, the project partners designed materials for aspects such as describing the target groups and evaluation.

For more information about the ERASMUS+ Basic Psychosocial Education project and its results, please visit www.virgil.at/bildung/psychosoziale-basisbildung and the Erasmus+ Results Platform as well as EPALE.



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Photography

Lisa Maria Jindra has been a study director at St. Virgil Salzburg since 2021. The trained timber engineer with qualifications as an artistic and creative trainer switched to generation management in adult education following her studies in architecture. Both professionally and privately, her life is closely connected to the topic of knowledge transfer, as characterised by the motto “from one another, with one another, and for one another”. Her role as a study director at St. Virgil allows her to integrate the aspects of “learning from one another, growing with one another, and being there for one another” into her day-to-day work. After all, St. Virgil Salzburg is a place of encounter and networking, of education and development, of culture and art, and of spirituality and inspiration. The focus is always on “successful learning”. Developing new perceptions, finding different interpretations, and drawing more differentiated conclusions are the core aspects in the programme areas of Psychosocial Basic Education, Life Paths, and Life Transitions for which she is responsible.

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Erasmus+ 2021–2027 for adult education – Utilise the European Education Area!

Learning in and cooperating within Europe is ideal in order to strengthen your educational institution.

ERASMUS+ offers many easy opportunities to do so. In this blog post, you can discover which highlights the new EU programme offers to adult education institutions!

The current programme features **mobility and cooperation** possibilities while defining four horizontal priorities:

- Inclusion and diversity
- Digital transformation
- Environment and fight against climate change
- Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement

Mobility and cooperation possibilities for adult education

ERASMUS+ Adult Education supports cross-border collaboration between adult education institutions. The aim is to improve the quality of adult education in Europe.

In order to achieve this objective, there is **Learning mobility of individuals** (Key Action 1) and **Cooperation among organisations and institutions** (Key Action 2). Adult education institutions can apply for ERASMUS+ funding through each of these two Key Actions. It depends on the needs of your institution which Key Action is the correct one for you.



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Key Action 1 – Learning mobility of individuals

Does your adult education institution wish to facilitate education and training in Europe for staff as well as for learners with fewer opportunities? Then you should choose Key Action 1! Your staff can then attend courses in Europe, give guest lectures, and observe the work of other organisations. Learners with fewer opportunities, on the other hand, can become mobile as a group or as individuals. However, the new programme not only assists people travelling from Austria to other European countries, but also those wishing to travel to Austria from Europe. So, you could invite experts to come to Austria, for instance! This would allow training to take place at your own institution, thus benefiting many employees.

It is also possible to include adult educators who are currently in training and wish to complete an internship in Austria. Sending institutions receive a grant for every mobility participant. The amount of funding depends on

the type of visit, the host country, and the length of stay. Applications for additional funds can be made in the case of participants with fewer opportunities.

The mentioned mobility opportunities can either be applied via an **Erasmus accreditation**¹ via **short-term project**². Erasmus accreditation is particularly suitable for organisations that want to participate (nearly) every year. They can apply once for accreditation (as an individual organisation or coordinator of an Austrian mobility consortium) and then gain simplified access to the annual budget.

Accreditation therefore creates financial planning security and long-term prospects for carrying out Erasmus activities. It is also flexible and grows along with the plans of the institution. Through accreditation, every organisation can determine its own pace for European collaboration, and transition to more ambitious and complex activities as it gains more experience.

If you do not (yet) wish to apply for accreditation or wish to be part of a consortium, then **short-term projects** present a very attractive alternative! Short-term projects are ideal for organisations that want to gain initial experience with ERASMUS+ and/or only wish to carry out mobility activities occasionally. These projects are limited with regard to the duration and number of mobilities and can only be conducted three times within a period of five consecutive years.

Key Action 2 – Cooperation among organisations and institutions

Does your institution wish to increase the quality and relevance of its activities, develop networks, promote



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internationalisation, transfer innovative methods, and work together with other institutions from different countries over a longer period on a topic of your choice within the scope of the ERASMUS+ priorities? If the answer is yes, then cooperation among organisations and institutions is the perfect choice!

Every project must address at least one of the four horizontal priorities or one specific priority of adult education (see programme guide part B, Key Action 2). The programme differentiates between **Cooperation Partnerships**³ and **Small-scale Partnerships**⁴. If you are already familiar with Key Action 2 from the past, then the invoicing of lump sums will nevertheless be new to you. One new aspect is that activities from both of these categories will be funded by means of lump sums. The applicant organisation and its partners determine their activities, estimate the total costs of the project being applied for, and then choose the lump sum which best suits the needs of the partnership. The requirements can increase according to the requested level of funding.

Cooperation Partnerships are particularly suitable for experienced organisations and for large-scale projects. The main aspects in this context are the development of new methods, the expansion of networks, and the internationalisation of activities.

The projects should deliver results and provide learning experiences which are reusable and transferable, and to can be utilised on a large scale. This category applies to projects between at least **three institutions** from at least three EU Member States or third countries associated with the Programme, with project durations of twelve to 36 months. Activities are funded by means of three different possible lump sums (either EUR 120,000, 250,000, or 400,000 per project).

Small-scale Partnerships are aimed at less experienced institutions and newcomers to the ERASMUS+ programme which have limited organisational capacities; the entry threshold for this category is rather low. In addition, it facilitates access to the ERASMUS+ programme for disadvantaged target groups. Small-scale Partnerships are collaborations between at least **two institutions** from at least two different EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme. The funding for this category is lower (EUR 30,000 or 60,000 per project), the project duration is shorter (6–24 months), and the administrative effort is less than in the case of Cooperation Partnerships.

Application deadlines, advice, and information

The application deadlines for Key Action 1 and Key Action 2 have been published on our website:
<https://erasmusplus.at/de/erwachsenenbildung>

The adult education team at OeAD – National Agency for ERASMUS+ also provides information events, webinars, and advisory services.

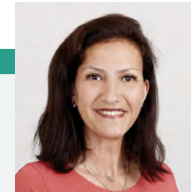
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Links

- 1 <https://erasmusplus.at/de/erwachsenenbildung/mobilitaet-akkreditierung>
- 2 <https://erasmusplus.at/de/erwachsenenbildung/mobilitaet-kurzfristige-projekte>
- 3 <https://erasmusplus.at/de/erwachsenenbildung/kooperationspartnerschaften>
- 4 <https://erasmusplus.at/de/erwachsenenbildung/kleinere-partnerschaften>





epale news

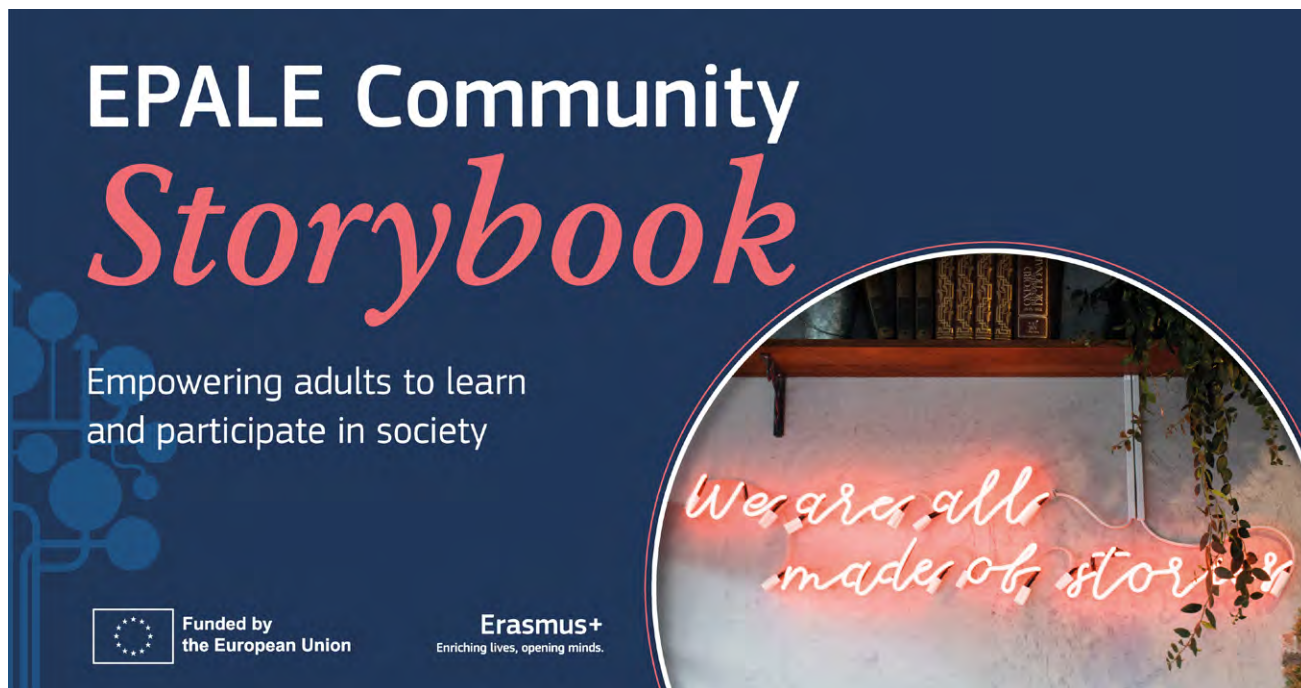
EPALE Community Stories – share your story!

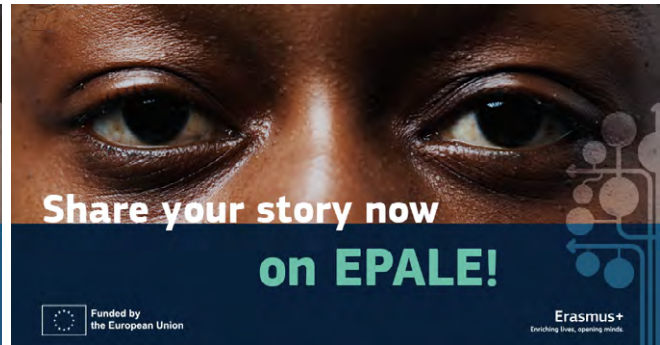
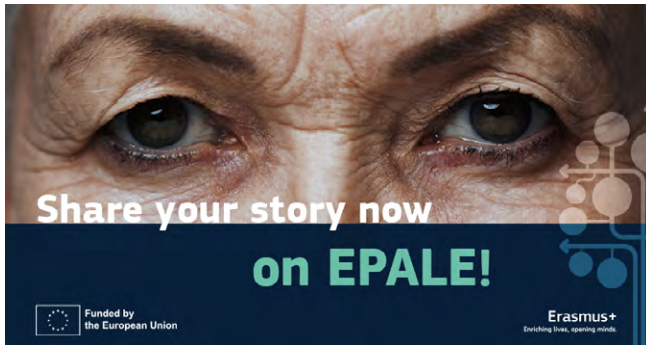
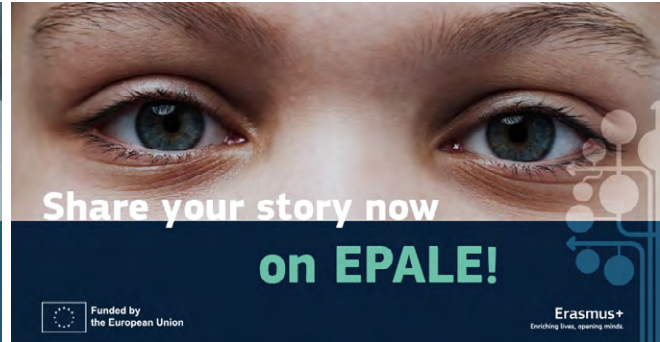
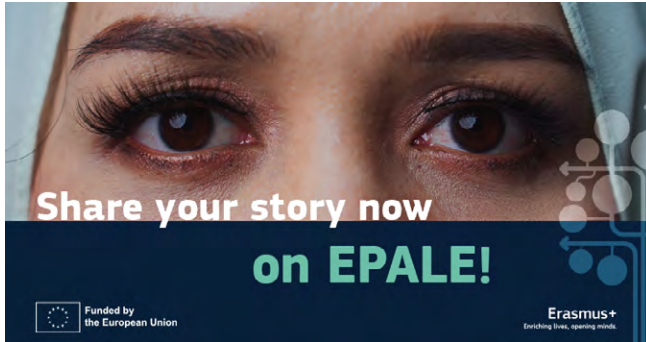
Community Storybook 2021

In 2021, EPALÉ's Community Stories initiative focused on adult learning activities related to the three thematic priorities of EPALÉ 2021 – Life and Work Skills, Digital Transition and Inclusive Social Change. The response was overwhelming, with a hundred inspiring stories collected from across Europe. In the Community Storybook 2021,

people from all over Europe share their personal stories of inspiration, resilience, and practice, including four contributions from Austria.

Download: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/de/blog/epale-community-storybook-empowerment-von-erwachsenen-zum-lernen-und-zur-teilhabe-der>





Community Stories Initiative 2022 – Share your story!

What is your earliest memory of learning? Who was there with you to make that moment enjoyable? Why did you choose to keep developing your knowledge and skills? And when did you choose to support adults in their personal and professional growth? What motivates you? And how has education changed your life?

EPALE would like to hear your voice, and your story, and invite you to be part of an archive of lived experiences, collected from educators from all over Europe.

Submit your story by 30 October 2022 to receive comments and inspire the community!

All participants will be invited to attend free and exclusive, high-level, Storytelling and Personal Narrative online training to be run after the completion of the initiative.

More information: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/de/blog/die-community-stories-initiative-2022>



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