

Grundtvig Learning Partnership 2013-2015
IMPROVING PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

**European policies and best practice with regards to improve participation in
adult education
Strategies – Measures - Tool**

GUIDELINES



1



**Website: <http://www.eu-adult-learning.net/>
<https://www.facebook.com/grundtvigIPAE>**

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IMPROVING PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION****European policies and best practice with regards to improve participation in
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“The challenge is to provide opportunities for all.”

The publication at hand brings together the information, best practices and results of the two-year Grundtvig learning partnership “Improving Participation in Adult Education” (2013-2015). Partners from Belgium, Lithuania, Slovakia and Germany came together in order to share information, best practices and results with regards to European policies and best practice in order to improve participation in adult education as well as “Strategies – Measures – Tool”.

Over the last years the European Commission and the Member States have tried to increase participation in adult learning, and develop efficient systems that reach all adults and involve all relevant stakeholders. Adult learning is a vital component of EU education policies, as it is essential for competitiveness and employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development across Europe. Migrants, ethnic minorities, including the Roma, seniors and people with disabilities may suffer from lower levels of education and therefore be at higher risk of social exclusion. The challenge is to provide opportunities for all.

Still, many education providers struggle to attract all target groups, especially the marginalized, the vulnerable and the most disadvantaged ones. Given demographic patterns in Europe, it is urgent to extend learning opportunities over the adult life-course, offering all adults possibilities to renew their skills and competencies for life and work as the need arises. The inclusion of disadvantaged target groups (educationally deprived groups), who are in particular reached at a disproportionately low level, need to be addressed in a different manner than other. Adult learning strategies should rather focus on bringing these groups into the fold of mainstream society, before involving them into further education.



Our ideas, findings and results we would like to share with other adult education providers and interested parties. The **guidelines** at hand provide a broader idea of how we worked, shine a light of the different situations in the national settings as well as a European perspective and offer best practice examples, ideas and inspirations, which can be transferred and adapted to own work-environments.

Further supporting documents can be found on our project website <http://www.eu-adult-learning.net/>. You can also find as on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/grundtvigIPAE>.

Please contact the partners, if you need more information:

EU WAREHOUSE, Belgium (coordinator)
UAB "Globalios idėjos", Lithuania (partner)
Škola dokorán n.o., Slovakia (partner)
VESBE e.V., Germany (partner)

Kicking off: structural, situational and psychological barriers, good and best practices from Germany, the “barrier overview”

In the transnational kick-off meeting in Germany we familiarized ourselves with the participation aspects in VESBE e.V.’s work: „structural, situational and psychological barriers - good and best practices”:

(The figures and facts with regards to the situation of Adult Education in Germany are available in a presentation).

VESBE e.V. works with both young and old

- who are unemployed or are seeking a vocational training or employment after long-term breaks
- who are psychologically and/or socially disadvantaged
- who are in a difficult personal situation (having young children or care-dependent relatives)
- who immigrated to Germany and have to cope with language barriers or cultural problems

4

VESBE e.V. works with multi-professional teams (e.g. social workers, teachers, vocational trainers, ergo therapists) and does its work usually within publicly funded measures (e.g. Federal Agency of Migration and Refugees, Labour Agency, Job Center [social welfare agency]) Additionally VESBE e.V. works on other international projects:

The partners learn that social benefits in Slovakia often depend on mandatory learning. This leads to resistance towards the educational offers. In order to get permission to start your own business it is also mandatory to obtain a certificate that proves certain theoretical skills have been attained. At the same time, practical experience already achieved plays no role and is not taken into consideration (e.g. extensive work-experience).

In the rural areas of Lithuania there often is a lack of training providers and of technical support for those interested in e-learning arrangements. VET and higher education are usually offers which have to be paid for.

Actual participation of those who can afford these offers is very low and there is a high number of drop-outs, especially among the younger adults – a possible explanation being addiction not only to alcohol but also to pc-gaming.

In both countries adult education usually targets vocational skills.

All partners agree that offers usually have to be short-term, because participants in adult education are often in need of employment and therefore demand a high intensity of learning and a “quick-fix-solution”.

The presentation of VESBE’s scheme, “Aktivcenter” (a measure for adults with mental and/or social issues) shows that individualized measures with a good ratio between the client and staff number increased motivation to stick to the scheme.

5

In Belgium, there are numerous problems arising from the splitting of linguistic groups, its federal structure and a tendency to bureaucratization. This is manifested, e.g. in the orientation process where people are persuaded to take up education to compensate a severe lack of workers instead of exploring their individual competencies and finding the most appropriate service. Main topics for adult education are language skills (Dutch and French are mandatory) and health.

Based on the discussion, the following questions arise which will be useful in the project process in order to deal with barriers:

- How do people choose their way of education?
- How can we support them in realizing that there are options for their future?
- How can adults (esp. those with disadvantages in the broadest sense of the word) be encouraged to join adult education schemes and finish them?
- If we do have the right measures what possibilities do we have to solve the problem of funding – as it will remain a problem.

- How can we promote appreciation for “low education jobs”, so that people will not have to participate in schemes in order to cover up for the lack of appropriate employment?
- What recommendations can we give to promote a more outcome-oriented assessing of competences and even their validation?
- Could we ensure sustainable success if we had a longer period of “after-scheme” backing?

All partners describe similar initial situations: Persons who are disadvantaged in the broadest sense, have less access to education and therefore run a higher risk of social exclusion. Furthermore, the rate of adults taking part in adult education is at a very low level. Therefore one of the group’s main interest is to find out, how the target group can be convinced to start educational measures and how to prevent early dropout.

What are the barriers and obstacles? What can a training-provider do? What responsibilities lie with the community, the state or even the EC? Final aim being to bundle the findings and develop strategies and tools which can be shared with all stakeholders.

In the next step we worked jointly on a common understanding of our project goals and content. This overview can serve as overview and guideline for the further work as well as a first major result:

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS	STRUCTURAL BARRIERS	SITUATIONAL BARRIERS	FINANCIAL / OTHER
<p>Fear of disappointment / failing Impatience towards learning Lack of commitment Fear to start / Fear of committal Dislike of teacher / co-student Lack of self-confidence No belief in impact on career Social anxieties Bad learning experiences (own or of others) Lack of support or encouragement Fear of being "different" Standing out in the community is depicted negatively Peer pressure Resistance to offers because they are mandatory to get social benefits Resistance to offers because they don't take into account personal experience Lack of persistence Lack of awareness of the meaning of learning Lack of self-reflection Lack of conviction to be master of his own destiny Fear of change Lack of ability to make choices Lack of hope to be able to change one's situation because of continuing or long-lasting discouragement Fear of new technology Fear that AE won't have the wished for impact Fear / risk that employer won't give recognition to AE</p>	<p>restricted funding / financial means lack of access to information about AE lack of transparency lack of training providers no technical support (esp. E-learning) quality of offers mismatches the expectations social benefits depend on mandatory learning lack of availability of appropriate offers</p> <p>themes course duration qualification level</p> <p>mandatory 2 languages cause problems bureaucratization in orientation employers don't give recognition to AE "overeducated" applicants lack of marketing for AE Lack of personalized approach to AE</p>	<p>stepping back into education needs adapting language barrier of immigrants lack of basic skills (illiteracy, innumeracy) Intensity of learning must be high No belief in impact No time for AE</p> <p>lack of care for children / care-dependant relatives difficulties in prioritizing lack of support risk of losing the breadwinning job while attending the AE course</p>	<p>financial barriers Lack of financial means / funding no technical support difficulties in prioritizing</p> <p>others drug abuse health problems other addictions</p>

**Individual barriers, strategic partnerships and stakeholder cooperation,
mobility, best practice**

In a next step we focused on the improvement of participation in adult education with regards to **individual barriers**:

The second transnational meeting in Slovakia at Škola dokorán gave us, among other, the possibility for European workshop and brainstorming in groups with regards to

- strategic partnerships with other providers/stakeholders etc. / cooperation with businesses and NGO / learning from European best practice;
- mobility as a means to improve participation in adult education;
- learning from European best practice.

Škola dokorán n.o. has a profound experience in activities in the field of improving participation in adult education, e.g. in the “Strategy of Slovak republic for integration of Roma people until 2020 – Where we are at the present?”, “Support of Roma students of secondary school through tutoring and mentoring”, “Parenting with Confidence Part 1, 2”, “The edge of the law – legal consequences”, “Promoting social and emotional development in early childhood” etc. (a comprehensive overview is available on the website).

8

We discussed and furthered the topics by sharing best practice on the implemented project “FAMILY AND WORK LIFE BALANCE“, supported by the Slovak Agency – the Social Development Fund (MESAaF) and ESF.

Target group of the project are job seekers with a child (women, women from marginalized Roma communities with a child) with the aim to help women with a child to increase their employability and to contribute to gender equality awareness at the labor market, and about the results of the research carried out during the project.

In the discussion we spoke about the education of the long term unemployed and demotivated people. Based on experiences of the project participants – many of them unemployed adults

Best practice ideas from Slovakian projects:

- To reach target group you need group internal champions of change – those who have benefitted from AE and who can through awareness-building convince people to participate in AE;
- To target women and single parents you need to include child support measures;
- To target families you should try to involve children and parents in the learning/teaching process;
- Early pre-school learning and child oriented teaching is a prerequisite for sustaining integration and change of attitudes
- Companies should be included in the process of sustaining income-generation for society.

Mobility as a means to improve participation in adult education (discussion)

The partnership discussed and exchanged idea on “What is mobility?” and its advantages for disadvantaged learners and the difficulties, to organize it. In general it is very favorable to provide mobility options for people, and give them a goal, opportunity, and show them where they can be. There are plenty ideas, like e.g. sending learners to Turkey in order to learn to cook (VESBE e.V.). Other ideas and experiences e.g. from GI: they have experiences with mobility – vocational training. People were placed in a company and gained work experiences, for example as hairdressers. Tourism or language development were also mentioned as feasible fields.

Mentioned obstacles were the difficulties in finding and preparing learners from marginalized groups. The preparation of mobility is very complex and costly, and mostly it is difficult to stay abroad for people who are employed.

We deepened our work in **European workshops** in order to find access to strategic partnerships with other providers/stakeholders etc. / cooperation with businesses and NGO / learning from European best practice; which stakeholders are relevant for education and their role, definition of the target group:

Workshop 1 – Lead questions:

- Which stakeholders in general are relevant and have an influence on the access of adults to Adult Education (AE)?
- What role exactly do they play?
- Create clusters of Stakeholders!

Definition of Stakeholder: Anybody or group who can impact and give benefit to the project target group:

Target Group

Socially disadvantaged and marginalized (examples)		
long-term unemployed and migrants (Germany/Belgium)	rural unemployed (Lithuania)	Roma, in particular unemployed (Slovakia)

List of Stakeholders (bottom-up):

1. Individual adults
Role: Responsibility for self/active decision-maker/ownership of future
2. Families (parents/spouses/partners/children)
Role: Support/ encouragement/role model
3. Relatives
Role: Support/ encouragement/role model
4. Peer groups and friends
Role: Support/role model/ encouragement/experience sharers
5. Neighbours
Role: Role model
6. Community level organizations (churches/clubs)
Role: Support/advice/experience sharers/advisors/ /providers of informal and non-formal education/awareness-building
7. NGOs and Social organisations (offering private training courses)
Role: Providers of informal and non-formal education/support and advice
8. Adult Education institutions (Private and Public)
Role: Providers of informal and non-formal education as well as formal education/advertising and awareness-builders

9. Companies/Private sector

Role: Motivation givers for gaining qualification (->employment)/ supporters of AE to fulfill employers' needs for qualified staff/ providers of in-house AE training/ providers of free-time activities

10. Municipality level, job centres / labour offices

Role: Funders/advice/ social services support/promoters of AE/awareness-builders

11. State level (Ministries of Education/Social Affairs / labour)

Role: Funders/policies / programmes / promoters / implementers of change/

12. National level (Federal Government)

Role: Funders/legislators/implementers of change

13. European Union

Role: Funders/policy makers/ legislation

14. United Nations (Millennium Goals)

Awareness building/Guidance/ Inspiration

11

Clusters:

- 1.-4. Individual / personal level with direct influence/ emotional level within social safety net // *their role*: self-motivation, decision makers, active, responsible, role model, give advice,
- 5.-8. Personally accessible organizational level // *their role*: support, advice, sharing experience, offer informal, formal education, vocational training, give motivation to the target group, support, fulfil needs, support free time activities, train people, funding,
- 9.-12. Formal level / Umbrella organizations // *their role*: funding, policy programs, implementing changes, guidance, awareness building, inspiration, changes

For Cluster 1.-4. Information on AE can be spread via:

- Word of mouth/ champions of change
- Sport and leisure clubs
- TV and radio
- Posters etc.in job centres
- Schools and kindergartens
- Churches and priests as multipliers



Workshop 2

Results from workshop 2:

★ Marketing ideas for AE providers:

- AE participants receive a discount for introducing 2 new participants to courses
- Special offers/discount for first time participants
- Child care offers
- Transport, especially in rural areas
- Reward system -> Offering benefits outside of courses – after a certain level has been reached free tickets for some social event/ coupons for restaurant/ social benefit cards including AE learning opportunities

★ Ideas for Companies

- In order to acquire qualified staff, companies can advertise with AE opportunities to attract job appliers
- Special incentives for companies should be provided for them to take on and train the socially disadvantaged (eg. CSR)
- Industry needs assessment in order to offer tailor-made courses
- AE participants should have the opportunity to gain work experience in companies
- Employers should be involved in AE curricula design

★ Ideas for AE promoters (State Institutions/NGOs):

- Bring training to the communities via champions of change as awareness-builders
- More funding/sponsoring for integration of socially disadvantaged from government (local and federal)
- More use of schools and public buildings for offering AE (after hours)
- Take more advantage of EU mobility programmes to promote AE participation
- Cooperation between different sectors eg. universities offering train the trainer courses for AE
- Participating in EU projects to promote AE participation

- More awareness –building and lobbying events (eg. at job centres)
- Social benefit recipients should be obliged to visit a information event on local AE offers

Results:

- 4 Cluster Matrix according to distance to individual
- Methods / means for stakeholders of 4 cluster matrix to improve participation in AE of project target group
- **Ministries/Authorities/Policy** and their role Lobbying: cooperation, communication, Campaigning: improvement of reputation of AE, Training
- **AE – inst/NGO mixed**: Change of practice, Cooperation – marketing, Information sharing, Umbrella organization, Competition of Carrier Development, Social experimentation – Child care, Health care, Transport, Combination of different type of education, theory and practice, accreditation, certificate
- **Business/Employers/ Entrepreneurs**: Enhance of reputation of AE, Needs Assessment, Adaptation of skills on professional level, Transition of requested knowledge, skills, Awareness raising, Agriculture, Rural, Education Farming
- **Individual/Family**: Tutoring, Mentoring, change management, Empowerment

WORKSHOP - Strategies to overcome barriers for entry into the Adult Education**Workshop 1****Ministries, Authorities, Policy regulators:***Lobbying*

- Enrichment of skills,
- Cooperation
- Communication

Campaigning

- Improvement of reputation of Adult Education /AE/

*Training***Adult Education institutions /mixed with NGOs/***Change of practice**Cooperation*

- Marketing
- Information sharing
- Communication with Umbrella organizations
- Competition on Carrier development
- *Web page, DVD*

Social experimentation – Trainings in different fields /accredited and other programs, certificates/

- Child care
- Health Care
- Transport – for connection of services

Business, Entrepreneurs, Employers*Enhance the reputation of AE**Needs Assessment**Adaptation of existing skills to the professional level**Transition of requested knowledge, skills,**Awareness rising**AE in the field of Agriculture*

- *Rural Education*
- *Farming*

Individuals, Families

- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Change management
- Empowerment

Workshop 2**Informing Individuals, Families**

Informing via:

- TV, Radio
- Clubs
- Churches
- Informal sector, associations
- Job centres
- Information events on benefit of AE 2 locations
- Schools, Kindergartens
- Champions of change

Awareness building

Mentoring

Issue of sustainability

Ideas for Children – Parents Learning approach

Child Care

Adult Education institutions, NGOs

Champions of Change

- Marketing for motivation
- Bringing Training to Community
- Special programs on integrating target group into AE /funded/
- Taking advantages of EU mobility
- Using new Technology
- Cooperation program among different organisations

Reward system –

- Social benefit cards, INc. Adult Learning Opportunities
- AE institutions offer benefits outside of learning

Job centres send target group regarding to AE information events

Offering childcare to target women

Ministries:

- *Funding programs for companies / AE Institutions/, NGOs*
 - *Policy Change /Erasmus/ -*
- All participants get a discount if they bringing 2 new participants*
Special offers for 1st time participation

Business, Employers:

Company looking for staff advertise with training opportunities
Inventiveness for companies to employ and train the target group
Social Responsibility – Image building by offering training

CAMPAIGNER:

- Informing companies
- Intermediary between company and target group

Examples:

- Labour office / Job centre
- NGO working with target group

SUSTAINABILITY:

Including companies in the process to sustain income generation

Psychological barriers, best practice and various measures

The partners furthered their work in the framework of the third transnational meeting, which was held in Vilnius. The host UAB "Globalios idėjos" held a very enriching and hospitalbe meeting.

UAB "Globalios idėjos" presented their work and relation to project topic. Loreta Golubevaitė, the director of UAB "Globalios idėjos" director, presented the activities of the company, including event organizing, mobilities of VET students, training center PRO and project management.

Moreover UAB "Globalios idėjos" have completed projects related to ICT and multimedia techniques, ICT usage in learning processes, the strengthening of dialogue between adult education providers and representatives of the labour market and strengthening orientation and guidance from school to job, increasing public awareness on the importance of art as a tool for social an educational work.

The training centre PRO

UAB "Globalios idėjos" cooperates closely with training providers and is a co-manager of the training centre PRO. This training centre provides various educational offers and tailor-made training for various specialists. Courses are available in classes and on e-learning platform www.mokymapro.lt.

The project partners ask about the motivation to participate in Lithuania. The main motivational tool used is Facebook. The partners exchanged information on the social media issue and the experiences in the countries (depending on the target group) were quite diverse.

Project manager Agnė Bliuvaitė presented in-depth information on [adult education provision](#) in Lithuania

A number of 2.43 Mio. adults were living in Lithuania in 2013. 5.2 % of the adults were participating in adult education in 2012. In 2013, this number was raised to 6.2 %. The main reason that prevents from participating in lifelong learning is that learners don't see the need to learn. Other reasons include: costs for learning, health and family issues and lack of time.

The main deficiencies are: money, services in counseling and institutions.

There are almost 900 adult educators in Lithuania.

The current situation of participation in adult education shows that less than 6 people out of 100 are participating in Lifelong learning. The survey reveals a huge market potential.

The third transnational meeting was focused on **psychological barriers** that prevent adults from participating in adult education. Measures and best practices to overcome psychological barriers which hinder participation in adult education were presented:

The first topic was related to **marketing** and ways to improve participation in adult education that can be implemented by adult educators. For in depth information consult the project presentation on “*Web 2.0 tools for strengthening competencies of adult education providers*”. Structural barriers hindering participation in adult education can be addressed by adult educators via marketing approaches. Tradition of AE-marketing versus WEB2.0 still clashes. Further activities in WEB2.0 tools and adult education marketing were presented.

The second topic was about **psychological barriers** with regards to **learn foreign languages**. The solutions to the barriers can be adapted to other subjects as well. It was shown how to overcome psychological barriers while learning foreign languages and how to optimize and how to do it effectively. Principles of successful learning were presented.

18

The third topic covered **mentoring** and **interactive** methods to overcome barriers for participating in adult education. Especially the necessary abilities for mentors were presented and highlighted and examples of mentor training tools given.

The guests from Latvia “Izglītības inovāciju pārneses centrs” presented their company, work and the situation in Latvia. Also, they introduced new topic, “Participation in adult education and employability of youth”.

The guests from Lithuania VŠĮ “Inovacijų biuras” presented their work relating to employability of youth and presented the „Initiative for European youth: sharing experience”. An initiative for youth was presented and the relation to the adult education made.

Another guest speaker from Lithuania VŠĮ “Žinių kodas” introduced the topic “elderly and education” and opportunities for participation in adult education for elderly people.

The group now continued to work in **European workshops**.

Topics were “**amplifying offers to meet demands and needs of target groups**” and “**communication, individual and social benefits**”.

Two groups were formed. We had a review of the barriers in order to complement them, cluster them and we thought about the reachability of target groups (on which level).

In a second step we looked at different kind of settings needed to be addressed for activities / measures.

With regards to the psychological barriers we discussed the potential value of prior/experimental learning and the adaptation of AE offers basing on needs.

The fears and barriers from all four partners and their target groups were pretty common. In one of the workshop groups, the following solutions were suggested:

1. Show success stories (unemployed people, who is employed now and successful, or immigrant who is celebrity in new country now)
2. Open door courses (with possibility to finish them)
3. Short time between the decision to start the course and the beginning of course
 - In Brussels e.g. you have to speak French and Dutch to have most of the jobs. So we need to have two groups. Group 1 – not educated – with little chance to get a job; Group 2 –educated – which has have some access to facilities where they can get education.
 - If adult concerned have a job (even simple one) they will not change it, because they have some (financial) security. They will not go to AE because they will not take the risk of losing their job.
 - Politics: obstacle even to Belgians (not only to immigrants).
 - Not to forget people from rural areas. They usually don't have high levels of education, they used to work with their parents. They don't have a chance to go to school and lack self-confidence and have fear of others (how they look at them). So it's very important to add them.
- Positive examples (real people who did what others are supposed to do or video sequences). Videos need funding.
- Mentoring on personal level. One to one contact, mouth to mouth propaganda. 3 ways to get to them:
 - a. If it is a community (like Roma). You need one man with strong standing in the community.
 - b. Social field workers in the municipality.
 - c. Target groups don't build the society (like refugees). You need to build a groups (like for cooking classes). For women is very important to have their children looked after (volunteers could be a solution, but they need to have immigrant background themselves).

The second work group presented the following points:

- It is an important part is to discuss the topics and to be clear about what are we talking about.
- We worked with categories and changed: how to help them to overcome barriers (easy, not easy and difficult).
- How target groups fit into categories: It is about the process that is not scientific, but fluent. It depends on prior education as well. Are our target groups valid for this process?
- The barriers: Matrix: A-N and 1-20. Deep psychological problems of those target groups getting into AE and how extensive the help is that they need.
- Measures for each group are very different. For example: fear of disappointment for Roma – no, but for long-term unemployed – very high.
- Mentoring could be a solution.
- Groups require time and it is costly because of the staff involved.
- For some groups you need qualified staff to apply measures.
- Peer learning for 2 groups: one who is trying to fit and one who is not.
- Eye to eye, not “we know better” approach.

20

In order to “own” the Grundtvig work and results and to make the cooperation sustainable, the partner had reflected about the work aspects which are / have been the most important / relevant / interesting for them and which they would follow up closer in the framework of the project.

Access and choice - European context(s): “structural, situational and psychological barriers / good and best practices: European level aspects

The final transnational meeting of the Gruntvig learning partnership took place in Brussels, Belgium. At the occasion of the final meeting the partners reviewed their work done so far and continued to exchange and learn from practice.

The final meeting was focused on European level aspects of the participation topic, “access and choice”, some marketing perspectives as well as on workshops on finalizing the policy-level recommendations.

EU WAREHOUSE presented new input on participation aspects on European level: **“structural, situational and psychological barriers / good and best practices: European level aspects”**.

The IPAE-topics were connected to the **EU2020-strategy priorities** and the EU headline targets on employment, early school leaving etc. as well as to the seven flagship initiatives, from which “Youth on the move” and “An agenda for new skills and jobs” are relevant to the project topic.

With regards to promoting Adult Learning on EU-level, EU countries have set a target for adult learning: by 2020, 15% of adults aged 25-64 should be taking part. In 2012, average participation was 9% and only 5 EU countries had reached the target rate. More adult learning can help Europe overcome the economic crisis, meet the need for new skills, and keep its ageing workforce productive. Learning is also essential for social inclusion and active citizenship. These days, people cannot just rely on the skills they acquired at school to last them till the end of their working life. The participation of adults in learning varies significantly between EU countries: from 1.4% to 31.6% (2012 figures), and the overall trend is that numbers are stagnating. Participation rates are especially disappointing for low-skilled and older adults. Action at European level will increase knowledge about successful policies, provide support, and enable a better exchange of experiences between countries.

EU WAREHOUSE related IPAE further to the **Adult Education Survey (AES)**. AES is a household survey which is part of the EU Statistics on lifelong learning. People living in private households are interviewed about their participation in education and training activities (formal, non-formal and informal learning). The target population of the survey is composed of people aged 25 to 64. The survey takes place every five years and its results are published on Eurostat website

The **Eurydice report 2015** demonstrates that participation in lifelong learning is influenced by several factors, including education level, employment status, age and skills. More highly educated and better-employed staff are more likely to have opportunities to access education programmes. For less well-educated and low-income citizens, education is a more difficult proposition. When asked about the obstacles to their participation in lifelong learning, nearly 40 % of these respondents stated that they didn't need it for their job. This indicates that many do not believe they have the opportunity to develop in their career, and also shows that they attach little value to the idea of learning for learning's sake. 22 % also stated that they did not have time for education because of family responsibilities, while a further 13 % considered provision to be unaffordable.

It was very interesting to observe for the partners, how the discussions and **findings on European level** correspond to the work done in the framework of the IPAE-project. The Eurydice report 2015 also stated, that "these findings leave several questions unanswered. Most importantly, should "lack of interest" be considered as an inevitable reality – an individual's state that has to be accepted? Or could it be taken up as a challenge to make adult education more appealing? And given the failure of lifelong learning provision to reach less well-educated citizens, are policies appropriately targeted to those most in need? For example is online information reaching – or missing – its intended audience (and does it have a specific audience in mind)? And in our communities, are we supporting family members and friends who show an interest in pursuing lifelong learning, particularly those people who have only attained the most basic education?"

22

Through a comprehensive overview of policies and data related to the renewed European agenda for adult learning, this Eurydice report aims to support the exchange of policy and practice between countries. The report concentrates on measures to ensure that the most vulnerable groups of adult learners, in particular those with low basic skills or insufficient qualifications, have appropriate access to lifelong learning opportunities. We went through chosen aspects of the report's six chapters, which provides data on adult education and training, national policy commitments to adult learning, main types of publicly subsidised programmes, learning flexibility and progression pathways, outreach initiatives and guidance services as well as targeted financial support.

The “**European Agenda for Adult Learning**” was also presented in the framework of the meeting. The Commission is working with 32 countries to implement the European Agenda for Adult Learning. The Agenda highlights the need to increase participation in adult learning of all kinds (formal, non-formal and informal learning) whether to acquire new work skills, for active citizenship, or for personal development and fulfilment.

1. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
2. Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
3. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning
4. Enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments
5. Improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult-learning sector

Looking at adult education and training in Europe, one in four adults in Europe have completed lower secondary education at most – differences between countries and age groups are significant. Around one in five adults have low literacy and numeracy skills, and nearly one in three have very low or no ICT skills. Adults with the greatest education and training needs have the least opportunity to benefit from lifelong learning.

See also results of the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): <http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/>

23

Across Europe, there is a wide range of education and training programmes which provide basic skills to adult learners – further investigation is needed to better understand the field. In all countries there are opportunities for adults to achieve a recognized qualifications during adulthood; however, the proportion of adults who have completed a medium-level qualification later in life varies between countries

Lowering the barriers to adult participation in learning calls for modes of delivery that help overcome time constraints; yet even when they are available, there is little evidence on how well used they are by low-qualified adults. Efforts are being made to encourage the provision of flexible learning routes, but in most European countries access to a particular level of education is still dependent on completing the previous level. While there has been significant progress on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL), enabling the most vulnerable groups to access this service is still a challenge.

The partners continued to work together in **European workshops** on the topic “Improving participation in AE – **access and choice**” – in order to deepen the understanding of the meaning of “choices” for access-topic and to learn from best practice and look at strategies, methods and tools. The results of the group work were fed back to the group.

With regards to the overall objectives of the IPAE-project, *access and choice* are central terms. *Choice* can be defined as the ability to exercise control over ourselves and our environment. And in order to choose, we must first perceive, that control is possible. How much choice you *technically* have, is far less important the how much choice you *feel* you have. With two sets two workshop questions the participants worked intensely on questions of choice and the “cost of comparison”. The workshop EU WAREHOUSE developed has been inspired and build on examples by the “**The Art of Choosing**” by **Sheena Iyengar**, a professor at the Columbia Business School, who is recognised as one the world’s leading experts on choice.

The results from the discussion: It is important for people to know that they have a choice and what influences the choice (like personal abilities, the community, religion, finances etc.). If somebody else makes a choice for you, you need to trust the person. Whatever the impact of our choice is, we need to take responsibility and to learn to deal with the consequences.

24

Long-term-unemployed adult learners e.g. don’t join (educational) schemes because they don’t respond to their needs. Very often the pressure of long-term-unemployment is underestimated – the requirement for this target group is sometimes simply too high – and the reward “to get employed” is not high enough (“same money”). There is no perception of the value of work in itself, which leads to low self-esteem.

Another team came up with the following three ideas around choices.

1. If you don’t see that you have a choice, you do not need to find out why (e.g. early school leavers, alcohol abuse);
2. People don’t have the courage to make the choice;
3. If you want to change, you can do it (“it is easier when you are still young” as a new paradigm”) and you need support on the way.

Another consideration was if choice is really attractive. So, if people are used to being forced, they won’t freely take choices. If you come from a system where you can’t choose, it is very unlikely that you respond fully to choices – and, there is also the possibility to fail.

The following work sheets had been developed by EU WAREHOUSE for IPAE, based on the examples given by Sheena Iyengar (see above):

WORKSHEET 1– CHOICE ON THE MIND

Choice is the ability to exercise control over ourselves and our environment. In order to choose, we must first perceive, that control is possible. How much choice you **technically** have, is far less important the how much choice you **feel** you have.

Discuss.

What does this mean with regards to learner groups we have focused on in this project? Refer to experiences from your work sphere.

Do you have suggestions for educational offer / trainings (both staff and learners) in order to create more awareness around the “choice” topic? Would you find that good / helpful ...?

WORKSHEET 2 – THE COSTS OF COMPARISON

FIRST SITUATION

A close relative is critically ill and in hospital and kept on life sustaining machines to help him breathe. The overall health won't improve. The critical condition implies severe neurological impairments that would confine him to bed, unable to speak, walk etc.

25

The doctors have decided that it is in the patient's best interest to withdraw treatment and turn of the machines.

- 1) Rate the extent to which you feel each of these emotions (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely).
 - a) Overwhelmed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 - b) Upset 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 2) How confident are you that the best decision was made?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 3) To what degree would you have preferred to make this decision yourself?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SECOND SITUATION

A close relative is critically ill, after three weeks the overall health has not improved. The doctors inform on two possible courses of action: continue the treatment or withdraw the treatment by turning off the machines. They explain the consequences of each action. If treatment is withdrawn, the patient will die, if continued, a 40% chance of survival and a 60% chance of surviving with severe neurological impairments.

Because of critical condition, the doctors have decided it is in the patient's best interest to withdraw treatment.

- 1) Rate the extent to which you feel each of these emotions (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely).
 - a) Overwhelmed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 - b) Upset 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 2) How confident are you that the best decision was made?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 3) To what degree would you have preferred to make this decision yourself?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

THIRD SITUATION

Same patient situation.

The doctors offer *you* a choice: Continue the treatment, or withdraw the treatment by turning off the ventilation machine. The doctors also explain the consequences of each decision. If the treatment is withdrawn, the patient

Grundtvig Learning Partnership 2013-2015
IMPROVING PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

will die. If the treatment is continued, there's a 40% chance that the patient will die and a 60% chance of surviving with severe neurological impairments. What do you do?

1) Rate the extent to which you feel each of these emotions (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely).

- a) Overwhelmed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
b) Upset 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) How confident are you that the best decision was made?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) To what degree would you have preferred to make this decision yourself?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Tasks:

- Discuss the different cases with regards to the different “choice” conditions and their implications. Point out the different conditions.
- Make references to the adult education sector and the discussions we had around e.g. psychological barriers and other barriers.
- Discuss “choice”//teacher/trainer/staff, “choice”// (disadvantaged) learners, “choice”// system.
- Would it be helpful to be more aware of the impact of choice?

And...Do you think, people always make the best choices?

In the next session the partners had a look at the joint work on marketing perspectives with regards to improve participation in and awareness of adult learning on which Globalios Idéjos and EU WAREHOUSE had work on together, building on the achievements in the framework of the GI “CAMP2.0: Challenging Attractiveness of lifelong learning: web 2.0 tools for strengthening Marketing and Public relations competencies of adult education providers”-project. In the framework of that collaboration various aspects like “Developing Social Media Strategy”, “Creation of Social Media Content”, “Social Media Tools“were looked at from the point of view of usefulness for improving access to adult education.

In our final session, we looked again at the policy-level recommendations again and discussed and complemented them. The debate was very lively and inspired and summed up the work achieved so far, trying to put it into thought what could be forwarded as recommendations of the IPAE-Team with regards to the policy level.

Expressed was a common wish for a more appreciative approach towards the topic with a strong humanistic value, not only emphasizing the fiscal and “money” aspects. There is definitely a need for more lifelong learning as well as a need to look at the gap between employment market and the philosophy behind it. (Lifelong) learning should not only be seen as a means to get people into employment again, but revalued altogether.



Thank you very much again to all partners and people involved for the journey we could take together. It was not only very fruitful and enriching with regards to learning and exchange of best practice, it was also very pleasant to work in a nice and stimulating atmosphere, where all partners were motivated to show their very best!

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