



Grundtvig Learning Partnership 2013-2015 IMPROVING PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

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.



The Grundtvig learning partnership "Improving Participation in Adult Education" with **partners** from Belgium, Germany, Lithuania and Slovakia will examine the multi-level **structural, situational and psychological barriers** to participate in adult education, elaborate on awareness and motivation and collect transferable best practice for change.



The potential of adult learning has not been yet fully exploited. Participation varies greatly and is unsatisfactory in many EU countries, and well below the EU target for average participation in lifelong learning (15% by 2020 for adults aged 25-64). In 2011, average participation was 8.9%, the overall trend is negative. Cedefop (2010) expects a decrease in the share of low and unqualified population from one third to one fourth within the decade 2010 to 2020. In absolute figures this is a reduction from 146 million to 113 million (-23%). Participation also decreases substantially in the case of low-skilled and older adults.

Especially the most disadvantaged groups who need learning most should be reached via AE. The partnership aims at enabling the inclusion of disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized target groups, which need to be specifically addressed.



Adult learners vary enormously in their backgrounds, attitudes, perceptions and potential access to (information) on AE. Offers do need to reflect the differences. With regards to marginalized and vulnerable groups there needs to be a focus on addressing situational, psychological and structural multi-levelled barriers.



The partnership aims at **increasing participation in adult learning**, and, additionally, exchange information and best practice on how to develop efficient systems that reach all adults and involve all relevant stakeholders.

The partnership will elaborate on the effectiveness of strategies to raise awareness of and motivation to participate in adult learning. Prior target group of this learning partnership measures are disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized groups at risk of social exclusion.

Specifically we intend to address the multi-level barriers those groups face in or to participate in adult education offers:

- *Situational barriers (e.g. individual circumstances due to age or family life);*
- *Psychological barriers (e.g. adults' life experiences, negative associations with the schooling environment, lack of confidence, sense of worthlessness, or social exclusion);*
- *Structural barriers (e.g. perceived lack of suitable programs, non-flexible education delivery systems, lack of access to adequate funding);*

The partners will exchange information and best practice with regards to transferable actions, which should/could aim at:

- developing awareness-raising activities and learning options suited to these needs, trying adult education in with every-day activities;
- demonstrating societal interest in including these groups of individuals, developing activities in settings other than schools or classrooms, and by adopting approaches that help to overcome traditional fears;
- changing perceptions (by promoting available options more widely) or introducing operational changes to overcome these barriers.



The partners:

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

Website: <http://www.eu-adult-learning.net/>