



1. INTRODUCTION	3		
The Reasons for lifelong learning	3		
Educator Project	3		
Benefits of learning for adults	3		
About Adults	4		
Adult education in the European Union	4		
Providers of informal education and training	5		
EU Initiatives	5		
Summary	6		
2. OVERVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES: IRELAND, POLAND, ROMANIA	7		
Adult education system in Poland	7		
Adult education system in Ireland	9		
Adult education system in Romania	11		
3. ISSUES SURROUNDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	13		
Inclusive education	13		
Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights	13		
Inclusion through education	14		
Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027	14		
It's not only about digitisation and the green deal – inclusion of excluded adults through education	15		
Methods of inclusion through adult education	16		
Good practices in inclusive adult learning – examples from Poland	17		
Inclusive education for adult migrants – an example from Romania	18		
Inclusive education of people with disabilities – an example from Ireland	18		
Continuing education, inclusive education	18		
4. EDUCATION OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS – GOOD PRACTICES FROM IRELAND, ROMANIA AND POLAND	19		
Lokalny Ośrodek Wiedzy i Edukacji (LOWE) – good practice in Poland	19		
		Good practice from AESD in Romania	24
		The Irish National Adult Learning Organisation – AONTAS	27
		5. COMPETENCES OF EDUCATORS OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS	31
		Principles of adult learning	31
		UNESCO definition	31
		Disadvantaged adults	32
		Types of education of adults from disadvantaged groups	32
		Adult motivations and trainers who can empower them	33
		Competences of adult educators	33
		Education of disadvantaged groups	33
		The basis of empathy	34
		Teaching of low qualified people	34
		Projects implemented in Poland	35
		An example of adult education in the world – the literacy of the Irish	35
		6. HOW TO INSPIRE ADULTS TO LEARN IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD?	37
		Adult learning	37
		Challenges for educators	38
		Knowledge sharing culture within an organisation	39
		Remote learning in a post pandemic world	39
		Adult Learning Action Plan	40
		7. COMPETENCES MAP	41
		Educator of disadvantaged adults	41
		Key competences of a trainer	41
		Competences Map	43
		GLOSSARY	47
		BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

1. INTRODUCTION

The Reasons for lifelong learning

In a society where employees change jobs more and more often, and the pace of implementing innovations and new technologies is constantly growing, people must show readiness as well as openness to constant changes. Continuing education turns out to be the expression and at the same time the driving force behind this approach at a certain stage of life. This is what allows you to acquire new skills needed to survive in the labour market. In the context of lifelong learning, non-formal and informal education becomes as important as their formal counterpart.

European Union countries have developed various forms of guidance services for adult learners and specific strategies related to education. However, the existing offer is neither sufficient nor attractive enough to reach people in particular need of additional training and supplementing their competences. Existing services often focus on ad hoc, short-term work and less on identifying educational pathways that lead to sustainable employment and social inclusion. Due to the lack of standardised procedures in the identification system and validation of non-formal and informal knowledge, it is extremely difficult for adult education and guidance professionals to steer adults into further education and training programs.

Educator Project

The Educator project – a pillar of social inclusion in adult education is an attempt to reflect on some important aspects that could help reverse the unfavourable trend described above.

First of all, it is necessary to think carefully and map the competences of educators who work or intend to work with adults with low qualifications. Well-prepared staff is extremely important so that adults want to reach for education in an informal system. Thanks to this, educators will have the opportunity to individually adapt the service to the needs and situation of each adult.

The next step will be to develop methods and ways of working with adults with low qualifications, so that they are motivated as effectively as possible to constantly improve their qualifications. The project will also facilitate the selection of tools for working with adults who have low qualifications and to respond to their needs in an interesting and inspiring way.

Benefits of learning for adults

The benefits of lifelong learning extend beyond getting a job and im-

proving your position on the labour market. In fact, such activities also contribute to non-economic goals, such as¹:

- self-realisation,
- improving health,
- community activity,
- social inclusion.

Nevertheless, according to OECD data², it is the people who need to supplement their competences the most, participate less frequently in various types of training.

The problem especially affects adults:

- with lower qualifications,
- displaced persons,
- elderly,
- adults employed in positions endangered by automation,
- “non-standard” employees – part-time and on-call work.

According to information published by the OECD in 2021, there is a gap between low qualified adults and highly qualified adults. The low qualified adults participate in training by as much as 40 percentage points less often, and with the increase in age the difference is even greater³. It is also alarming that people at risk of losing their jobs due

1 Ruhose, Jens & Thomsen, Stephan L. & Weilage, Insa, 2019. “The benefits of adult learning: Work-related training, social capital, and earnings” *Economics of Education Review*, Elsevier, vol. 72(C), str. 166-186.

2 OECD, 2017, *Education at a Glance 2017*, OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2017_eag-2017-en

3 OECD, 2021, *Education at a Glance 2021*: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, s. 12 i 132/133, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

to automation are much less willing (less frequently by 30 percentage points) to attend training than adults in less endangered positions⁴.

About Adults

It should be noted that OECD⁵ experts, when speaking of low-qualified people, mean adults who really need support. They are people who can at best perform very simple reading tasks (for example, short texts on familiar topics).

The abilities of low-skilled adults in mathematics are limited to the ability to solve simple or one-step tasks including⁶:

- counting,
- sorting,
- basic arithmetic operations,
- understanding simple percentages.

The OECD includes low-skilled adults among low-educated adults, that is, those who have not completed secondary or equivalent education, and adults with low levels of cognitive skills. These are individuals who achieve a proficiency level 1 or lower in the reading, writing and / or numeracy dimension in the PIAAC – Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies⁷.

PIAAC, the International Adult Skills Survey, is conducted in more than 40 countries and measures three basic skills: Understanding of text, Mathematical Reasoning, and Problem Solving.

If we adopt the criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, it turns out that more than one fifth of adults in OECD countries have low skills: 22% have a low level of education, and even more have a low level of cognitive skills. In countries where data is available, on average 26.3% of adults are able to complete at most some very basic reading and / or maths tasks⁸.

In addition, it is worth emphasising that a large obstacle to the social and economic participation of such adults is also low digital skills, which additionally hampers the full use of the opportunities offered by modern tools, and their inclusion through skills improvement is a serious challenge⁹.

Adult education in the European Union

In 2020, the proportion of people aged 25-64 in the EU who participated in education or training was 9.2%, according to Eurostat¹⁰. That's 1.6pps. less compared to 2019. Part of this decline can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, which was related to, inter alia, resignation from training conducted in a stationary mode. Denmark, Finland and Sweden stand out particularly well compared to other EU countries – in these countries the percentage of adults participating in lifelong learning is in the range of 20–28.6%. Apart from them, only Estonia, the Netherlands and Luxembourg can boast a 15% participation rate in continuous education. At the other end, there are countries for which this indicator did not exceed 4%: Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Croatia. Data from individual countries show how difficult it is to meet the assumptions – in 2009, the framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training was adopted, according to which by 2020 at least 15% of adults should follow the assumptions of lifelong learning.

On average, women are more likely to learn throughout their lives than men, although the differences are not big; Indicators from 2020 show 10% of women compared to 8.3% of men learn through lifelong learning. The reverse tendency occurred in four countries: the Czech

4 OECD, 2021, Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

5 OECD, 2021, Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

6 OECD, 2021, Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>

7 OECD, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>

8 OECD, 2019, Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning, www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf

9 Institute for Market, Consumption and Economic Cycle Research under the direction of Krzysztof Głomb, 2019, Report Competences of the future in times of digital disruption <https://digitalpoland.org/assets/publications/kompetencje-przyszlosci-w-czasach-cyfrowej-dysrupcji/kompetencje-przyszlosci-w-czasach-cyfrowej-dysrupcji-raport.pdf>

10 Eurostat, 2020, Education and training – Overview <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/overview>

Republic, Germany, Greece and Cyprus. The only country with equal values for both sexes was Romania. Changes in women's and men's attitudes can be seen if we look at the results of the Adult Education Survey (AES) which is conducted every 5-6 years¹¹. The latest data from AES is for 2016 and shows that men were more likely to improve their qualifications in Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Italy. The opposite was the case in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Sweden and Lithuania. The AES results indicate that between younger (aged 25–34) and older people (aged 55–64) there are big differences amounting to around 20%. Adults with higher education care for their development in the area of education much more often than those who only graduated from secondary school.

Providers of informal education and training

According to Eurostat's 2016 Adult Education Survey, employers were the most frequent organisers of informal education and training activities, providing over a third (33.7%) of such activities in the EU¹². They provided almost two-thirds of non-formal education and training in Bulgaria and three-fifths in Hungary. Among the less popular provi-

ders of non-formal education and training across the EU, non-formal education and training institutions were of relative importance, which was particularly noticeable in Poland (48.7%) and Slovenia (36.7%). In Lithuania and Finland, formal education institutions (schools, universities and educational centres) play an important role, while in Sweden – commercial institutions for which education and training are not the main activity¹³.

EU Initiatives

Vocational education and training are key components of lifelong learning systems. The Copenhagen process, established in 2002, provides the basis for cooperation in vocational education and training between 33 European countries¹⁴. The overall aim is to encourage more people to make greater use of apprenticeships, whether in school, in higher education, in the workplace or in private courses. The activities and tools developed as part of this process aim to enable users to combine and use knowledge gained over time, both in a formal and non-formal context.

Recently, on November 24, 2020, the Council of the European Union adopted a Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Justice and Resilience¹⁵. It sets out the key principles to ensure efficient vocational education and training, adapting them to the needs of the labour market, and provides high-quality learning opportunities for both young people and adults. It places great emphasis on increased flexibility in VET, increased workplace learning and apprenticeship opportunities.

In the Porto Social Commitment signed on 7 May 2021, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU¹⁶, the European social partners and civil society organisations endorsed the target that by 2030 at least 60% of all adult EU citizens should participate in training.

**By 2030, at least 60% of adult EU citizens
should participate in training.**

The European Skills Agenda¹⁷ presents a five-year plan to help individuals and businesses develop and use more and better skills. The ac-

11 Eurostat, 2020, Adult Education Survey <https://www.eui.eu/Research/Library/ResearchGuides/Economics/Statistics/DataPortal/AES>

12 European Commission, 2016, Providers of non-formal education and training activities [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Providers_of_non-formal_education_and_training_activities,_2016_\(%C2%B9\)_\(%25_share_of_all_non-formal_learning_activities_of_adults_aged_25%E2%80%93364\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Providers_of_non-formal_education_and_training_activities,_2016_(%C2%B9)_(%25_share_of_all_non-formal_learning_activities_of_adults_aged_25%E2%80%93364).png)

13 European Commission, 2016, Providers of non-formal education and training activities [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Providers_of_non-formal_education_and_training_activities,_2016_\(%C2%B9\)_\(%25_share_of_all_non-formal_learning_activities_of_adults_aged_25%E2%80%93364\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Providers_of_non-formal_education_and_training_activities,_2016_(%C2%B9)_(%25_share_of_all_non-formal_learning_activities_of_adults_aged_25%E2%80%93364).png)

14 Center for European Information and Documentation, 2002 Session of the European Council in Copenhagen <https://oide.sejm.gov.pl/oide/images/files/dokumenty/konkluzje/kopenhaga200212.pdf>

15 Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020/C 417/01 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29>

16 Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020/C 417/01 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29>

17 European Commission, European Skills Agenda <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>

tions of the skills agenda also relate to tools and initiatives to support people in their lifelong learning pathways.

The Council of the EU also raised the subject in the Employment Guidelines.

Decision 2020/1512 of October 13, 2020¹⁸ focused on increasing labour supply and improving access to employment, skills and competences.

In the document, the Council of the EU calls on the Member States to enable everyone to anticipate and adapt better to the needs of the labour market, in particular through the continuous increase of skills and retraining.

Summary

Lifelong learning can take place both within and outside formal education and training systems. It is an expression of investment in people and knowledge, as well as popularising the acquisition of basic skills (including digital) and expanding opportunities for innovative, more flexible forms of learning. Activities undertaken in this area should aim to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning opportunities and a variety of educational experiences.

Policymakers have long recognised that adult learning is crucial for workers, companies and entire economies to prevent the depreci-

ation of human capital and remain competitive in a globalised and ever-changing work environment. There is ample evidence that adult education enables employees or jobseekers to maintain and upgrade

their skills, acquire the competences needed to succeed in the labour market, and to strengthen overall resilience to external shocks such as the COVID – 19 pandemic¹⁹.



18 Council of Europe, 2020, Official Journal of the European Union, EU Council Decision 2020/1512 of 13 October 2020 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020D1512&from=ES>

19 OECD (2021), "To what extent do adults participate equally in education and learning?", in Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/7d242daf>

2. OVERVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES: IRELAND, POLAND, ROMANIA

Each country has a number of keywords and terms that describe and define lifelong learning, including adult learning. For the purposes of the project, the Partners decided that the adult learning system covers activities in the field of formal education and non-formal education for people over 25 who have completed or stopped their formal education path.

The adult learning system covers activities in the field of formal and non-formal education for people over 25 who have completed or stopped their formal education path.

Adult education system in Poland

1. Data about learning of adult Poles.

1.1. Structure of qualifications

In Poland, 7% of adults (aged 25-64) have only primary education (ISCED 0-2), 60% have secondary education (ISCED 3-4), and 33%

have higher education (ISCED 5-8). 6% of women and 7% of men have at most primary education. On the other hand, a significant discrepancy in the percentages according to the gender criterion can be observed in the case of secondary and higher education. Over 66% of men have secondary education and 27% have higher education, in the case of women these values are 54% and 39% respectively²⁰.

The highest percentage of people with primary education is in the 50-64 age group. At the same time, the highest percentage of people with higher education is in the younger age group, i.e., 30-39 years of age.

1.2. Level of basic skills

According to the PIAAC results²¹, there is a large proportion of people with low skill levels in Poland. On a five-point scale, the ability to understand a text, almost one fifth of the adult Polish population is rated at 1 or below, and in the field of mathematical reasoning – nearly a quarter. At the same time, the group of people with a skill level of 4 or 5 is relatively less numerous in Poland than in other OECD countries.

1.3. Participation in education and training

According to Eurostat data²², in 2021 only 5.4% of adult Poles (aged 25-64) participated in education and training during the 4 weeks before the survey. Poles primarily choose non-formal education (4.6%) and work-related training (3.5%).

People with no more than primary education (1.1%) participated in the least amount of training. The most educationally active people are the most qualified ones (11.2%).

Participation in education and training looks better in the 12 months prior to the survey. According to the data of the Adult Education Survey, in 2016 25.5% of adult Poles acquired new skills or improved them. In this case, non-formal education dominates (22%) and participation of people with higher education (43.2%)²³ also dominates.

Only 12% of adult Poles declare that they would like to develop but cannot do so due to private or professional difficulties. At the same time, over 61% of adult Poles say that they do not want to participate in education and training.

²⁰ polon.nauka.gov.pl, ISCED classification <https://polon.nauka.gov.pl/pomoc/knowledge-base/5755/>

²¹ PIAAC, PIAAC International Adult Skills Survey <https://piaac.pbs.pl/badanie-piaac/>

²² Eurostat <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

²³ GUS, 2016 https://stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5488/3/3/1/ksztalcenie_doroslych_2016.pdf

2. Legal framework, management and coordination

The basic strategic document defining the Polish adult learning system is the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030²⁴.

According to the adopted assumptions, the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 consists of two parts:

- Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 (general part) – adopted by the Council of Ministers on January 25, 2019.
- Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 (detailed part). Policy for developing skills in line with the idea of lifelong learning – adopted by the Council of Ministers on December 28, 2020.

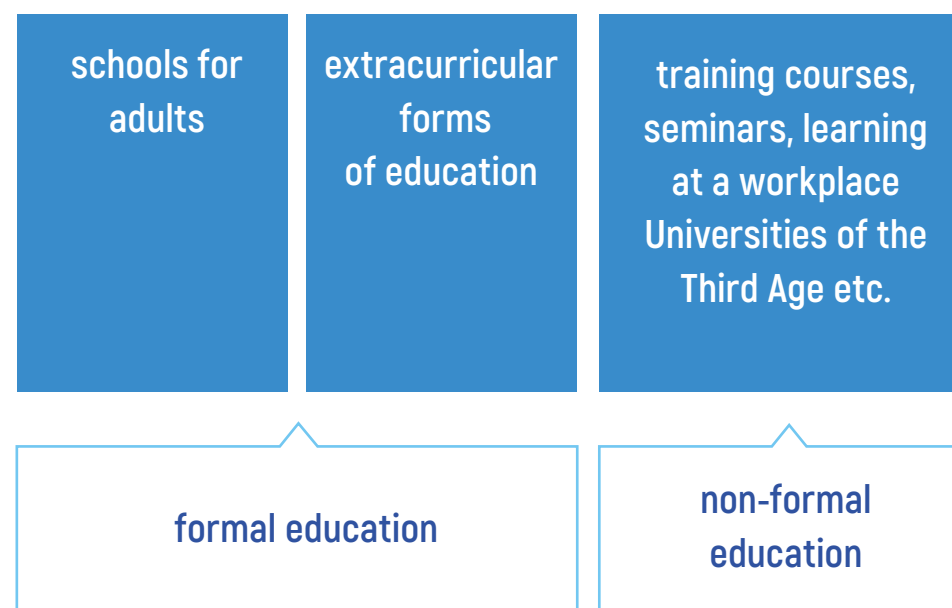
The strategy includes six priority areas:

- raising the level of key skills in children, adolescents and adults,
- developing and disseminating a learning culture geared to active and continuous skills development,
- increasing employers' participation in the development and better use of skills,
- building an effective system of diagnosing and informing about the current state
- of skill and skill needs,
- developing effective and permanent mechanisms of cooperation and inter-ministerial and intersectoral coordination in the field of skills development,

- providing equal opportunities in terms of access to development and the possibility of using skills.

Integrated Skills strategy 2030 creates a framework for the activities of stakeholders involved in the processes of acquiring and developing skills²⁵.

The adult learning system in Poland consists of three pillars:



Issues related to formal education (education) are regulated by the Education Law²⁶. Additionally, some aspects in formal and non-formal education are defined in the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System and the Regulation of the Minister of Development and Finance of August 29, 2017 on the register of entities providing development services²⁷. The regulations of individual ministries in the context of the development of professional qualifications and training of the unemployed should also be mentioned.

3. Main tools supporting the adult learning system

- **Integrated Qualifications System and Integrated Qualifications Register** – effective from January 15, 2016. The minister coordinating the IQS is the minister of education. The act defines such terms as: qualifications, full qualifications, partial qualifications, market qualifications, regulated qualifications.

The Integrated Qualifications System is to ensure:

- quality of the awarded qualifications,
- recognition of learning outcomes in non-formal education and through informal learning,
- accumulation of achievements and their recognition,
- information on qualifications available in Poland,
- comparison of qualifications obtained in Poland with qualifications in other European Union countries.

²⁴ European Commission, Eurydice https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description_pl

²⁵ Ministry of Education and Science, 2020 <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/zintegrowana-strategia-umiejetnosci-2030-czesc-szczegolowa--dokument-przyjety-przez-rade-ministrow>

²⁶ Sejm, 2016, Act of 14 December 2016, Education Law <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20200000910/U/D20200910Lj.pdf>

²⁷ Kancelaria Sejmu, Zintegrowany System Kwalifikacji, akty prawne <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/ByKeyword.xsp?key=Zintegrowany%20System%20Kwalifikacji>

- **Database of Development Services**²⁸ – was launched in 2016 as part of the first project “Development and maintenance of the nationwide Register of Development Services” (implementation period 2015 – 2018). It replaced the search engine for training services – “Inwestycja w Kadry”. The concept of the Base was developed in the course of public consultations attended by representatives of communities interested in solutions in the field of lifelong learning and the adaptability of enterprises and their employees. It assumes the possibility of a free choice of the entity with which entrepreneurs and their employees will improve their qualifications. The base makes it a simple and a quick way to find development services that respond to user needs. Thanks to an extensive search engine with a wide selection of filters and a standardised form for reporting and presenting the service, each user has the opportunity to compare the offers they are interested in. The evaluation system for development services included in the Development Services Database gives the opportunity to evaluate the services provided, and on the other hand, it is an important element in the process of selecting a service or a service provider for other users. It also offers the possibility of ordering a “tailor-made service”, i.e., one that directly responds to the needs of users.

Adult education system in Ireland

1. Structure of qualifications

In Ireland²⁹, 12% of adults (aged 25-64) have only primary education (ISCED 0-2), secondary education (ISCED 3-4) can be enjoyed by 35% to the population, while as many as 53% have higher education (ISCED 5 – 8).

In the case of people with only primary education, there are significant differences in the numbers between women (40%) and men (60%)³⁰. On the other hand, very slight discrepancies can be observed in the case of secondary and higher education. Over 51% of men have secondary education, and 45% have higher education, in the case of women these values are 49% and 55%, respectively.

2. Level of basic skills

In 2017, slightly less than one in ten (8.6%) of adults aged 25-64 participated in formal education in the 12 months prior to the survey, and around five out of ten (49.5%) adults participated in non-formal education. More than half (53.9%) of adults aged 25-64 have participated in lifelong learning in the last 12 months, and just over six out of ten (62.1%) have participated in informal learning activities.

Younger people were more likely to take part in formal educational activities in the past 12 months. For example, 14.7% of those aged 25-34 participated in formal educational activities compared with 2.9% of those aged 55-64.

The OECD Adult Skills Survey shows that 17.9% of Irish are at or below level 1 on the five-point literacy scale. At this level, the person may not be able to understand basic written information.

25% of Irish people score at or below level 1 in numeracy. At this level, a person may have difficulty performing simple mathematical calculations. 42% of Irish adults score at or below Level 1 in using technology to solve problems and complete tasks.

3. Participation in education and training

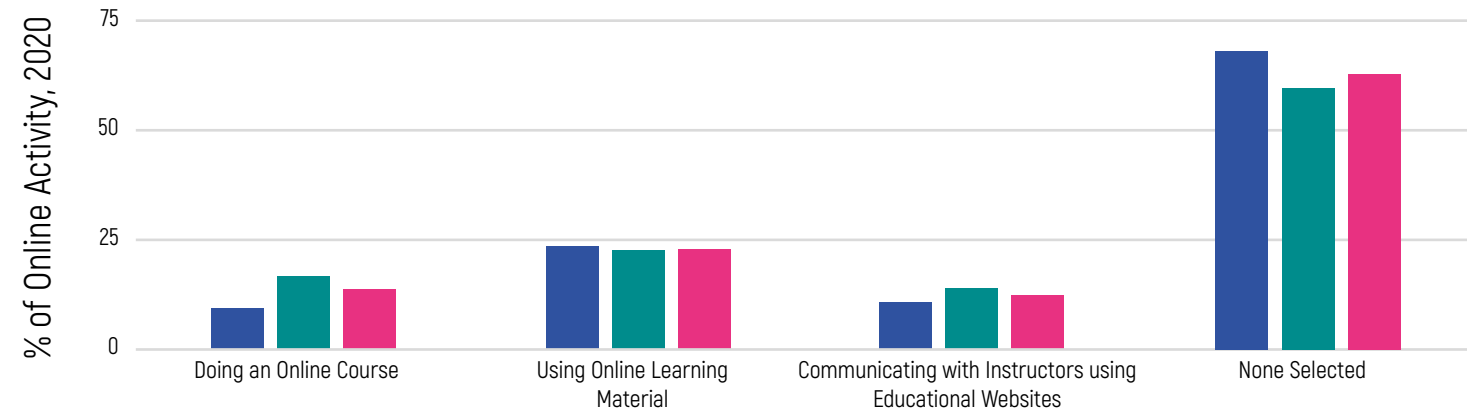
Younger people more often undertake online educational activities. In March 2020³¹, 19% of people aged 16-44 did an online course, compared with 13% of people aged 45-59 and only 6% of people aged 60 and over. The proportion of people aged 16-44 using other online learning materials was 32% in March 2020, compared with 24% of those aged 45-59 and just 8% of those aged 60 and over. About one fifth (21%) of people aged 16-44 communicated with instructors or used educational websites / portals and 12% of people aged 45-59. People aged 60 and over have not benefited from online education.

28 PARP <https://uslugirozwojowe.parp.gov.pl/>

29 Eurostat <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

30 Eurostat <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

31 Central Statistic Office, Ireland's UN SDGs 2019 – Report on Indicators for Goal 4 Quality Education <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-sdg4/irelandsunsdgs2019-reportonindicatorsforgoal4qualityeducation/adulteducation/>



Source: CSO, Adult Education Survey.

4. Legal framework, management and coordination

The Department of Education³² (DE) is responsible for policy, provision, funding, and regulation of education at all levels. Since 2010 the DES is responsible for the vocational training sector.

In Ireland, men are less likely than women to pursue a career. In 2019, 36% of graduates of upper secondary vocational schools were men, compared to 55% on average in OECD countries.

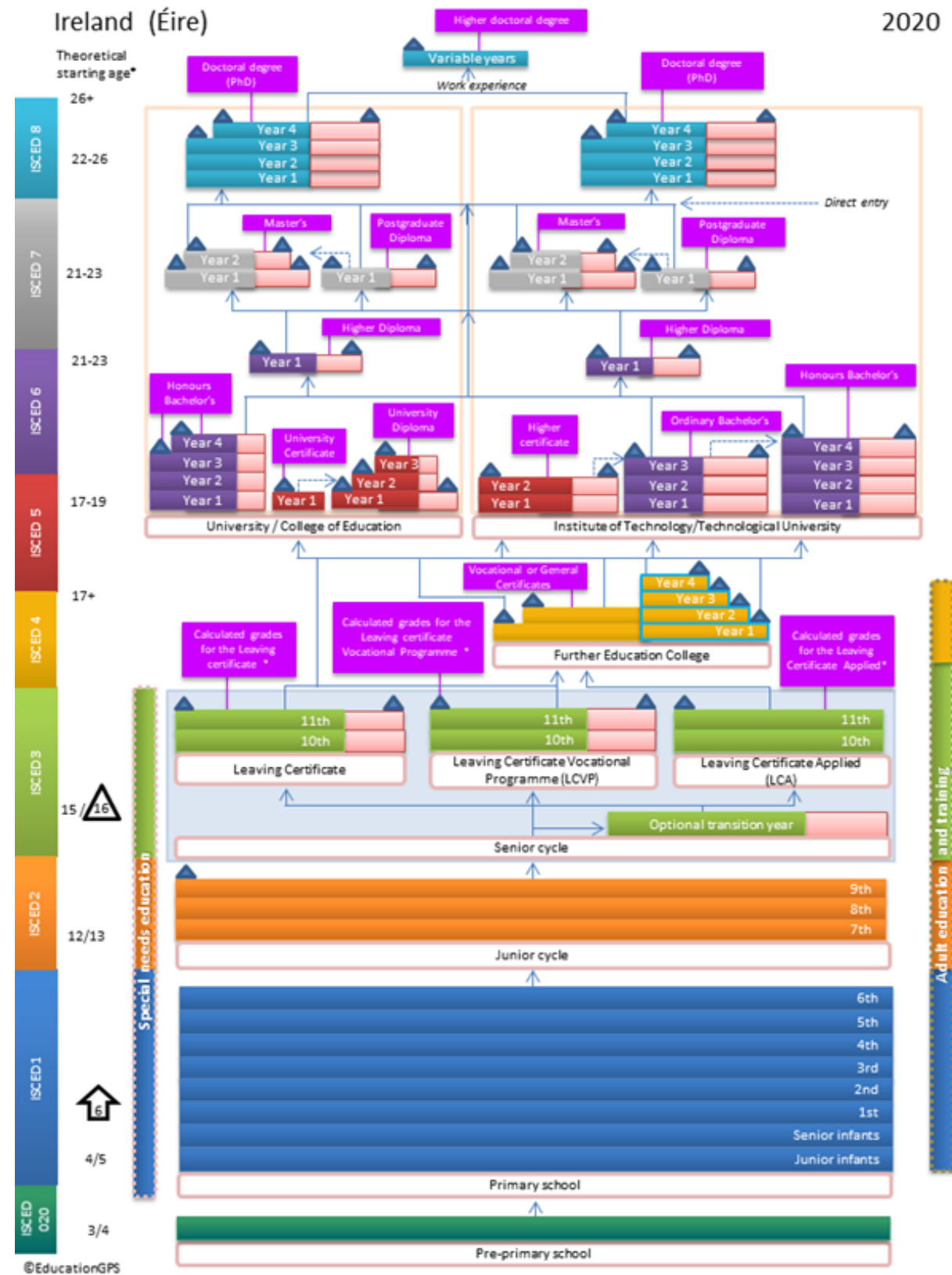
In Ireland, 62% of women aged 25–34 had a higher education qualification in 2020 compared to 54% of their male peers.

In 2018, Ireland invested a total of \$ 9,921 per student into higher education institutions compared to \$ 10,454 on average in OECD countries. This is 3.3% of GDP, compared to 4.9% on average in OECD countries.

In 2019, all children aged 3-5 were enrolled in ECEC and primary education in Ireland, compared to 88% on average in OECD countries.

The diagram of the adult education system is presented below:

Source: OECD, 2020 <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=IRL>



32 European Commission, Eurydice, Ireland <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/overview>

The fundamental strategic document defining the Irish learning system is³³:

- **Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Plan 2017** – was a major policy initiative addressing educational inequalities. It builds on the DEIS Plan for Educational Inclusion (2005), which provided a range of targeted support to the most disadvantaged schools. Since 2017, 79 schools have been added and 30 have received enhanced support, including programs targeting the transition, well-being and professional development of teachers.

DEIS also introduced new targets for student retention and progression, as well as initiatives to improve adult literacy and family literacy.

- **The national strategy for improving reading and numeracy skills (2011-2020)** aimed to raise standards in ECEC and compulsory education by mobilising for action: teachers, school heads, parents and community, community assessment, curriculum, assessment and support for people with additional needs.

Ireland undertook a reorganisation of its further education sector in 2013. A new central body for further education and training (Seirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna – SOLAS) was created, bringing strategic orientation to the sector³⁴.

33 Vocational Training Committees have been replaced by 16 Education and Training Councils (ETB) to better integrate training and education, increase system responsiveness and improve the quality of the offer.

SOLAS and ETB programs develop skills for both working and unemployed people, facilitate the transition to the workplace and allocate resources to vocational schools and community colleges.

Adult education system in Romania

1. Structure of qualifications

In Romania³⁵, the percentage of adults (aged 25-64) with only primary education (ISCED 0-2) and higher education (ISCED 5-8) is 19% each respectively, while the most people have secondary education (ISCED 3-4) 62%.

In the case of education of women and men in Romania, there is no clear discrepancy between the sexes.

2. Level of basic skills

Participation in and access to adult learning remains at a very low level, despite the need to upgrade and retrain the workforce. Adult learning participation³⁶ was 1.1% in 2017, well below the EU average of 10.9%. The population's digital skills are improving but are still among

the lowest in the EU: in 2017, only 29% of the population had at least basic digital skills (compared to the EU average of 57%). The skills of society are inadequate to the needs of the modern economy.

3. Legal framework, management and coordination

The Ministry of Education³⁷ organises and runs the national education, research, technological development and innovation system in partnership with both subordinate and coordinated institutions.

The general legal framework for the organisation, administration and functioning of education in Romania is established by:

- the Constitution (ch. 2, ch. 32),
- the National Education Act – organic law,
- ordinary acts and government ordinances,
- detailed procedures and regulations are established by government decisions and orders of the Ministry of Education,
- national education system.

School education in Romania:

- primary education – year 0-4 (from the age of 6),
- middle school – year 5-8,
- high school – year 9 -12 / technical school – year 9 -13 / vocational school – year 9 -11.
- compulsory education ends with year 10.

33 OECD, 2020 Education Policy Outlook Ireland <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Ireland-2020.pdf>

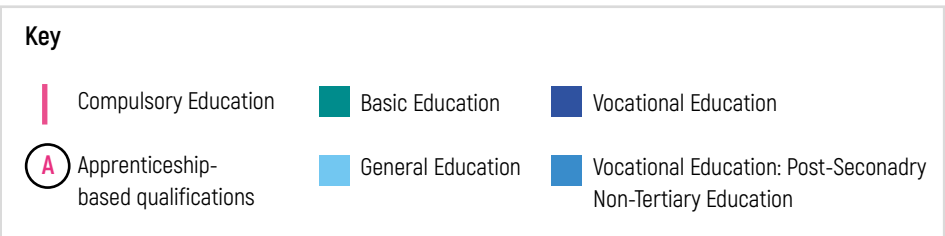
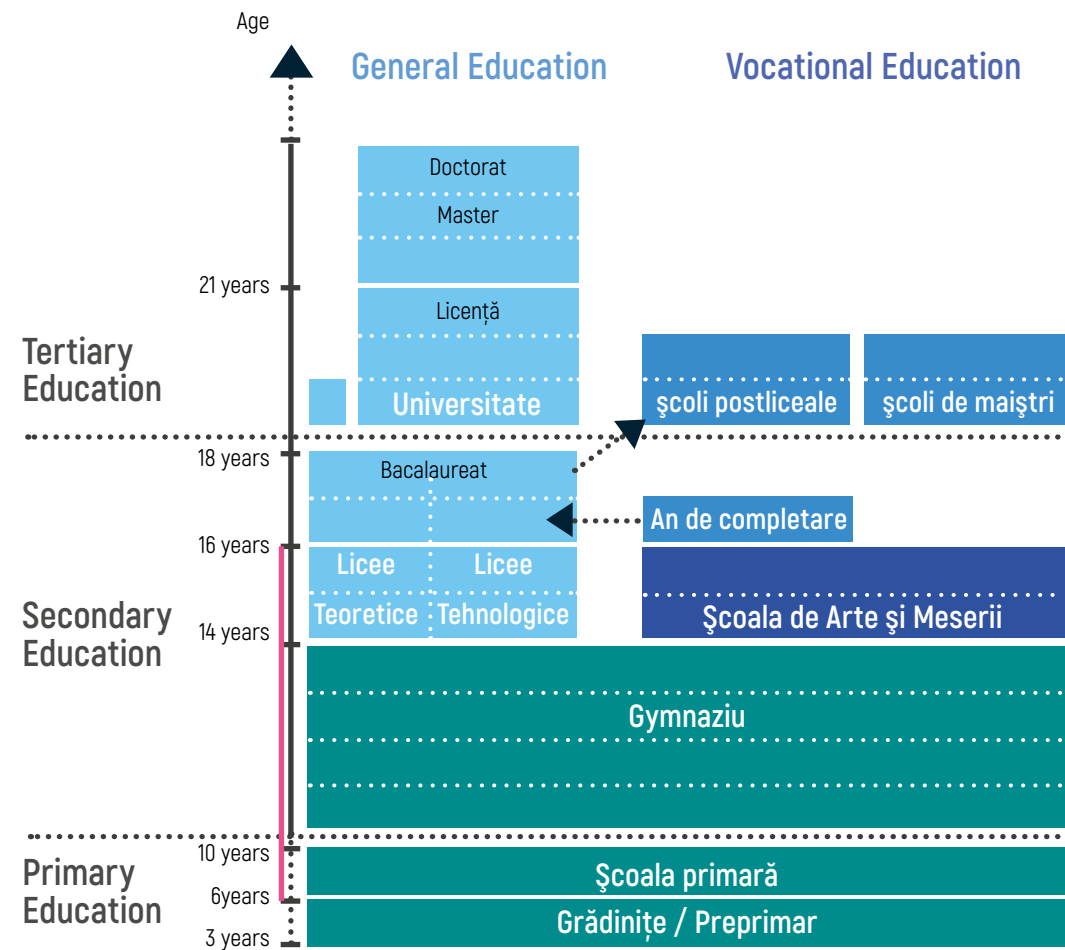
34 Seirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS) [http://ga.negapedia.org/articles/Seirbh%C3%ADs_Oideachais_Lean%C3%BAaigh_agus_Scileanna_\(SOLAS\)](http://ga.negapedia.org/articles/Seirbh%C3%ADs_Oideachais_Lean%C3%BAaigh_agus_Scileanna_(SOLAS))

35 Eurostat <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

36 European Commission, Eurydice, Romania <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/romania/overview>

37 European Commission, Eurydice, Romania <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/romania/overview>

Romanian Education System



Source: European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education, Higher Education Framework in Romania <https://www.eoslhe.eu/higher-education-framework-in-romania/>

Adult education covers training programs at all qualification levels, organised in the public or private sector.

- At the public level, the Institute of Educational Sciences runs training courses through which it promotes education reform.
- The Teacher Training Center offers professional development courses in relation to the teacher's professional and transversal skills system and to national and European education policies and strategies.

Romania has one of the lowest labour force participation rates in the EU and its working-age population has been steadily declining since 2008, while labour and skills shortages are increasing. There is therefore a need to make better use of existing human resources and invest in current skills and future workforce. However, the education and training system struggles to provide the skills the country needs due to the challenges of quality, equity and labour market adaptation.

The number of early school leavers remains high, especially in rural areas and among Roma. Many of the 15-year-olds who are Romania's future workforce do not have the basic skills required to solve the problems that adults today routinely grapple with. Educational poverty is particularly acute among disadvantaged people, which exacerbates social inequalities. Digital skills of the general public and young

people are below the EU average. Less than a third of Romanians aged 16-74 have at least basic digital skills, compared to the 58% EU average. The availability of specialists with higher education is limited by the number of graduates – it is estimated that almost 40% of Romanian university graduates aged 24-64 emigrated.

There is a significant skill mismatch with a high proportion of people with higher education is over-qualified in relation to their occupations or employed in a sector that does not correspond to the field of their education. Many employers perceive curricula in secondary and higher education as too abstract, implemented with insufficient emphasis on practical application of knowledge and problem solving, and that outdated teaching methods used that focus on memorisation rather than problem solving and team collaboration.

There is no skills forecasting system that can be used in the planning of VET and higher education programs, although it is expected to be developed as a prerequisite for the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds (2021-2027). Despite the high demand for training to keep up with economic trends and increase the resilience of the workforce, participation in adult learning programs is very low.

3. Issues surrounding inclusive education

Inclusive education

The issue of social inclusion, also referred to in the literature as social integration, should be considered together with the issue of social exclusion. Recognising the phenomenon of exclusion and discussions about it facilitated the search for methods to remedy the situation in which individuals or entire groups are excluded from participation in social life.

It is assumed that the issue of social exclusion was first raised in France in the 1970s. At that time, only people in a difficult economic situation were considered socially excluded³⁸. In the mid-1980s, the term was extended to include “not only the material but also the spiritual and symbolic aspects of the phenomenon”³⁹. As Janie Percy-Smith notes⁴⁰, social inclusion and exclusion appeared in the discourse of the European Communities during the tenure of Jacques Delors, a French economist and politician who chaired the European Commission in 1985-1995.

Initially, the European Economic Community conducted pilot activities, but the lack of legal grounds meant that they were contested. The

1999 Treaty of Amsterdam (TA) changed the situation. As stated in Article 117, both the Community and the Member States aim to:

- promoting employment
- improvement of living and working conditions
- adequate social protection
- building dialogue between social partners
- development of human resources allowing to increase and maintain the level of employment
- counteracting social exclusion⁴¹.

After the TA came into force, the Social Protection Committee was established, whose role is to promote cooperation between European Union countries and the European Commission in the field of social protection policy. Among other things, the SPC publishes annual reports on social inclusion⁴².

In the latest study⁴³, the SPC points out that in the years preceding the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion was gradually decreasing – by a total of about 2.3 million. However, this did not help to meet the assumptions

adopted in the “Europe 2020” strategy – as recently as 2010, heads of state and government declared that after a decade the number of people at risk of poverty and exclusion would fall by 20 million. The plan among the EU member states was implemented in half of the assumed amount, although it is worth noting that in the case of Poland – the numbers were more than the government initially assumed. In Poland, it was planned that 1.5 million people would be lifted out of poverty or socially included, while the positive change affected 4.8 million people.

Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights

In 2021, the European Commission revised the assumptions and presented an action plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights. According to it, by 2030 the number of people living in poverty is to fall by 15 million, of which 1/3 should concern children. While this goal is fundamental, it is worth looking at the other two that are important in the context of social inclusion. The first of them concerns employment

38 Dan Allman, *The Sociology of Social Inclusion*, SAGE Open, 2013 rok, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012471957> [accessed on October 15, 2022].

39 H. Silver, *Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms*, *International Labour Review*, vol. 133, 1994.

40 J. Percy-Smith, *Policy responses to social exclusion: towards inclusion?*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

41 Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, Article 2, https://oide.sejm.gov.pl/oide/images/files/dokumenty/traktaty/Traktat_amsterdamski_PL_1.pdf [accessed on October 15, 2022].

42 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/social-protection-committee/> [accessed on October 23, 2022].

43 2021 SPC annual review of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and developments in social protection policies.

– by 2030 at least 78% of people aged 24-60 should have a job. What should be done in order to achieve this? The tasks that help to make this achievable focus on the following topics:

- reducing the employment gap between women and men. In 2020, 78.3% of men were employed, while the rate for women was 66.6%
- increasing the availability of care and educational facilities for children, so that it is easier for women to combine their professional and private life
- reducing the percentage of NEETs (not in employment, education or training), i.e., people aged 15-29 who remain outside the sphere of employment and education – from 12.6% in 2019 to 9% in 2030
- increasing the participation of under-represented groups in the labour market, i.e., elderly, low-qualified, people with disabilities, those living in rural areas and away from major city centres, LGBTIQ people as well as racial and ethnic minorities and migrants⁴⁴.

Inclusion through education

Another objective of the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights relates to the participation of adults in training. As highlighted by the European Commission, the background to the changes is the ongoing dual transformation – digital and green, as well as the recovery of the economy after the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pande-

mic⁴⁵. In this context, participation in training is necessary to improve the situation of individuals in the labour market, but also to stimulate innovation, ensure social fairness and address the digital skills gap. The assumption for 2030 is that the annual participation in training and courses by adults will be at least 60%. Which, admittedly, is an ambitious goal, considering that in 2016 this percentage was 37%, and among people with low qualifications – only 18%. When it comes to digital skills, the European Commission plans that at least 80% of the population aged 16-74 should have basic skills in them in order to be able to join social life and participate in the labour market in the conditions of digitisation⁴⁶.

Let's look at the European Commission's ideas on how to achieve the goal of adult training and education in the fields of the twin transitions. The EC primarily emphasises the importance of continuous investment in education and training systems, starting with facilities for children and youth because they provide the basis for further acquisition of skills and facilitate the dissemination of information on biodiversity and ecosystems. As for issues related to climate neutrality, their promotion, and thus the development of competences in the field of green technologies, will support the Green Deal initiatives, i.e., "Power Up", "Renovation" and "Recharge and Refuel"⁴⁷.

- "Power up" refers to the initial introduction of clean technologies that will be used more widely in the future

- "Renovate" refers to actions for the energy efficiency of buildings
- "Recharge and Refuel" is intended to promote technologies that will promote the use of sustainable transport⁴⁸.

Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027

In the area of digital skills, an important element is the implementation of the Action Plan in the field of digital education for 2021-2027, where the primary goal is to adapt the education and training systems of EU countries to the realities of the digital era. The document presents 2 priority areas:

- Supporting the development of a highly effective digital education system
- Improvement of digital competences and skills appropriate in the era of digital transformation⁴⁹.

The first priority area covers infrastructure issues, improving the qualifications of teachers and employees in the education and training sector, as well as high-quality teaching materials or securing online platforms that will allow safe use of the network and ensure respect for ethical standards.

The second priority area refers strictly to the issue of acquiring skills by participants of the education system, i.e., it specifies tasks related

44 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, Action Plan for a European Pillar of Social Rights, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0102> [accessed on October 16, 2022].

45 Op.Cit

46 Op.Cit

47 Op.Cit

48 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pl/IP_20_1658 [accessed on October 17, 2022].

49 Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, <https://education.ec.europa.eu/pl/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan> [accessed on October 17, 2022].

to building basic digital competences from an early age, counteracting disinformation, understanding issues related to artificial intelligence and big data, as well as educating specialists. The authors of the document also refer to the issue of gender equality and strive to increase the representation of women in studying IT related course and in IT professions.

The emphasis on the development of digital competences in EU countries results from the data of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development from 2018 – in the study “Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners” which found out that less than 40% of teachers in EU countries feel ready to use new technologies in educating others⁵⁰. It is also clear that young people cannot deal with these topics on their own and growing up with digital devices does not determine the acquisition of the necessary competences – this is the conclusion of the “International Computer and Information Literacy Study” conducted in the same year⁵¹.

ICILS, developed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, aims to assess how well students are prepared to study, work and live in a digital world. In terms of numbers, 18% of students did not even reach the lowest level where they were supposed to demonstrate functional knowledge of computers as tools. Only a quarter showed this ability. Higher levels, consisting in

independent work on computers, were achieved by 21% of the study participants, and only 2% showed the highest level⁵². The third reason why action is needed in the field of digital skills is that one in four low-income families in the EU has neither access to a computer nor to broadband.

It's not only about digitisation and the green deal – inclusion of excluded adults through education

Learning, in particular lifelong learning, is not only the acquisition of skills related to new technologies or ecology. Improving qualifications in any field allows to reduce the number of people not participating the labour market and affects the quality of processes and the effects of performed tasks among the professionally active⁵³. In addition, it translates into the levels of employee involvement in work. Thus, it prevents or minimises the phenomenon of social exclusion resulting from professional inactivity.

The role of education in social inclusion is equally important for people with physical or intellectual disabilities. When it comes to people with intellectual disabilities, it is important to prepare them for adulthood as part of primary and secondary education. At the same time, in the course of education, it is crucial to work “on resources”, i.e., based on

the strengths and talents of individual people. As emphasised by Regina Korzeniowska from the University of Zielona Góra⁵⁴, recognising *these resources and developing self-awareness and knowledge about the capabilities of a given individual should be a priority in education*. In addition, the choice of further education path should be taken in cooperation with a career counsellor who, apart from information about the needs of the student, will also take into account the requirements of the local labour market. Korzeniowska adds that local social support is necessary for adults with intellectual disabilities.

Education has the potential to socially include homeless people as well. Beata Szluz in the article entitled “Education and social inclusion on the example of homeless people”⁵⁵ points out that *people affected by homelessness become unable to cope on their own and get lost in the surrounding reality*. At the same time, she points out that it is education that is important in the process of solving this social problem.

It is a two-way approach – on the one hand it relates to educating the society so that they have a greater understanding of the needs of the homeless, and on the other hand – the prevention of homelessness as well as and social and professional reintegration. When it comes to the unmet educational needs of the homeless, Szluz cites studies that show that participation in vocational courses is the largest. The next place was taken by primary, vocational and secondary schools.

50 OECD (2019), TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en> [accessed on October 18, 2022].

51 <https://www.iea.nl/studies/iea/icils/2018> [accessed on October 18, 2022].

52 International Computer and Information Literacy Study 2018, <https://www.iea.nl/studies/iea/icils/2018> [accessed on October 18, 2022].

53 <https://www.prawo.pl/akty/dz-u-ue-c-2021-504-9,69512612.html> [accessed on October 18, 2022].

54 R. Korzeniowska, Social inclusion of adults with intellectual disabilities on the example of social support, Disability - issues, problems, solutions. No. III/2018(28)

55 <https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Lukac1/subor/Szluz.pdf> [accessed on October 19, 2022].

Among the socially excluded, it is not uncommon for the elderly to be economically inactive, while the WHO emphasises that active aging depends on three factors: health, safety and participation⁵⁶. In an article about the role of education in active aging Satya Brink points out that lifelong learning (both formal and informal) supports the achievement of four goals:

- Self-management, i.e., understanding what aging is about and adapting to the new situation, according to the degree of changes in life
- Personal development that allows you to lead a fulfilling life by understanding the world around you in economic and social fields
- Social Contribution, i.e., maximising knowledge for the benefit of the family, community and society
- Heritage relating to the transfer of experiences, ideas and infrastructure for the next generation⁵⁷.

Methods of inclusion through adult education

The value of inclusive education for adults and children is invaluable, but how to use it effectively? First of all, it is worth knowing the bar-

riers that make adults reluctant to learn. This includes using new knowledge through the prism of previously acquired experiences, habits and beliefs, fear of being judged, as well as resistance to new solutions and difficulties in changing habits⁵⁸. Of course, among young people such obstacles are also active, but to a lesser extent, because their deepening occurs with age.

And what encourages adults to learn effectively? According to Malcolm Knowles, an important figure in the history of andragogy, several conditions are crucial:

- Making decisions about what they want to learn and taking responsibility for it
- Knowing why they should learn
- Acquiring new skills through experience
- Learning through problem solving
- Training brings direct value⁵⁹.

In the education of the elderly, it is also worth considering social and health-oriented education, as well as focusing on presenting the use of new technologies. What does this mean for those who develop and deliver courses and training for adults? First of all, that they should prepare materials based on the real needs of course participants and

clearly inform them about their aims and intentions. The previously listed barriers show that in the education of mature people it is necessary to build a partnership relationship and create a safe space for exchanging views and experiences. In turn, Knowles' teachings show that it is worth relying on examples from the participants' lives, as well as teaching through experience⁶⁰. The last element develops the 4-step cycle of effective learning developed by David Kolb. The next elements are experience, observation and analysis, conclusions and theory, testing in practice⁶¹.

Using this information, the International Social Security Association (ISSA) developed tools for adult trainers to teach other adults in workshops⁶². However, the advice can be extrapolated to other educational activities as well. Even before choosing a method, the authors of the document entitled "Adult Education Methods Training methods for Vision Zero workshops – a tool for trainers" suggest educators to ask themselves some important questions:

- Who will take part in the activities?
- Why are we preparing the training? What is its purpose?
- Who prepares the course? What is our role in the process?
- Who do we work for and why?

56 <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/uczenie-sie-przez-cale-zycie-osob-dojrzalych-edukacja-na-rzecz-aktywnego-starzenia-sie> (accessed on October 19, 2022).

57 Op.Cit

58 Andragogy, how to teach adults? Centre for Education Development, <https://www.ore.edu.pl> (accessed on October 20, 2022)

59 Malcolm Knowles, Modern Practice of Adult education. Andragogy versus Pedagogy, Assosiated Press, Nowy Jork, 1972.

60 Andragogy, how to teach adults? Centre for Education Development, <https://www.ore.edu.pl> (accessed on October 21, 2022)

61 David Kolb, Experiential learning, Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1984 rok.

62 <https://visionzero.global/sites/default/files/2018-08/2-VZ-adult-education-methods.pdf> (accessed on October 21, 2022).

- What is the most important goal that guides us in this course?
- Would the participants of the training approach it differently? Would they prefer to put emphasis elsewhere?
- What tools can we use to support the selected methods?

In order for the educational space to be safe, it is worth for the participants to get to know each other, e.g., by interviewing other people and then introducing them to the others. This helps in situations where people taking the course are not ready to talk about themselves in front of the group. The exchange of views and experiences may be encouraged by methods such as “Think-Pair-Share” talks, which assume that, after the substantive part, the participants will talk to each other discussing what they have just learned, and then share what they have learned from the joint conversations – e.g., with questions that remain open to them. Another example of an activity that facilitates the sharing of opinions is the so-called learning strolls, during which small groups (maximum 4 people) discuss newly acquired knowledge. In turn, faster acquisition of knowledge and skills can support assigning new roles to participants – so that they coach each other and help overcome learning difficulties.

Ole Dosland, a trainer and consultant, points out⁶³, that adults learn using different styles – some are visual learners, others prefer learning by listening, and others prefer movement. Therefore, educators of larger groups should transfer knowledge in a way that will allow participants to absorb it regardless of their learning style. Dosland also emphasises that in the process of educating adults, one must first focus on the advantages of mastering, for example, a new skill,

and only then move on to teaching it. Moreover, the advantages should be individually tailored to the individual participants. The maximum tolerance of the brain, i.e., the time it is able to spend on assimilating new knowledge, depends on the time of day and is usually 10-15 minutes, but does not exceed 50 minutes. This means that trainers should work in short intervals, alternate different styles of learning or engage participants in discussions after a short session to stimulate them. Feedback is also important so that adults know if they are going in the right direction.

Good practices in inclusive adult learning – examples from Poland

Fundacja Inicjowania Rozwoju Społecznego (Foundation for Initiating Social Development) runs the project “Towards Self-Independence” for people in the crisis of homelessness. As explained by Karolina Piotrowska, who has been active in the foundation since 2012, the project is about helping homeless people get on the right track, enabling them to acquire appropriate competences through training and support in everyday functioning⁶⁴. Participants in the project live in shared apartments – each occupies a separate room, but soft skills are needed so that they learn how to share a common space. In addition, people in the crisis of homelessness, through the “Towards Self-Independence” program, take part in culinary trainings focused on preparing meals on their own and making reasonable purchases with a specific budget, as well as in practical trainings, where they learn how to use ho-

usehold appliances and care for cleanliness and common spaces. The initiative involves psychologists, therapists and lawyers, as well as housing guardians who look after the participants and act as mediators in the event of conflicts. An additional element is the help of career advisors who prepare CVs with participants, conduct sample recruitment interviews or indicate places where it is worth applying for a job. As Piotrowska adds, the biggest challenge is related to the selection of people who will live together – there are many people in need, and 9 real estates. Currently, 47 people participate in the program.

In Sopot, the Our Friendly House Foundation, in cooperation with city authorities and entrepreneurs, opened, in accordance with its name, “Our Friendly House” – a 2-story building where people with disabilities receive support. On site, they receive the help of an assistant and a carer, as well as services supporting resourcefulness, rehabilitation, participation in social life and professional activation as part of the Foundation’s business activity. Residents eat meals together, take care of cleanliness, and participate in Tri-City cultural events. Some of them are in active employment. As they admit, living in “Our Friendly House” has taught them to be more independent and allowed them to build relationships with others, including romantic ones.

An interesting example of an educational project involving the unemployed aged 50+ is JOBfirma. It is a fictitious enterprise where participants of the programs acquire new skills to find their place in the labour market easier. During the 5-week course, they come to “work” every day, where they perform office work, learn the use of new technologies and teamwork. They also take part in workshops on moti-

63 <https://www.qualityassurancemag.com/article/9-adult-learning-tips-and-techniques/> [accessed on October 23, 2022].

64 <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/w-kierunku-samodzielnosci-rozmowa-o-projekcie-z-karolina-piotrowska> [accessed on October 23, 2022].

vation and communication, where they learn how to function in conflict situations, deal with stress and manage time. The topics of the also include issues of nutrition, budget management and other issues that best respond to the needs of the participants. In Poland, such an initiative under the name “On the way to activity” was carried out by the Federation of Social Organisations of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship FOS in cooperation with the areas of the Olsztyn Functional Urban Area and the Olsztyn Food Bank.

Inclusive education for adult migrants – an example from Romania

The Romanian Institute for Adult Education (IREA) runs the Upskilling Adults 45+ project, which was created for migrants aged 45 and older, as their skills in many technologies are limited, which makes them underqualified to function on modern labour market which requires at least basic use of digital tools. The project focuses on solving difficulties related to (re)integration in the labour market faced by migrants from and outside the EU, as well as people who return to the country after years of living abroad. The aim is to equip these people with entrepreneurial, digital and soft skills, and to validate these skills.

The steps taken under the program are:

- Training of staff working with migrants aged 45+
- Providing holistic services to people with a migrant background so that they can participate both in the labour market and in the life of local communities
- Developing a two-way learning strategy to address both soft and digital skills at the same time⁶⁵.

Inclusive education of people with disabilities – an example from Ireland

The Blossom Personal Empowerment Program is a skills development program for people with intellectual disabilities aged 15-20 in Ireland. The beginnings of the project date back to 2017, while in November 2020, Blossom Ireland launched an assertiveness course, the aim of which is to teach young people with intellectual disabilities to speak out, give opinions, clearly define their preferences, learn about their strengths and communicate them to others. During the 6-week course, young people, under the supervision of facilitators, perform specific tasks on the My Blossom Channel platform (launched to offer

a wider reach to those in need whose mobility has been particularly reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic). The content is adapted to the needs of people who cannot read or write, so the authors use video lessons. The Personal Empowerment Program was created to support people with intellectual disabilities in choosing their further life path. The program has been developed based on over ten years of Blossom Ireland’s experience working with people with intellectual disabilities⁶⁶.

Continuing education, inclusive education

Social exclusion affects people in the crisis of homelessness, but also the elderly, people with disabilities, migrants or people representing sexual minorities, as well as women. The remedy for exclusion is, among other things, education, but it is worth remembering that there must always be two groups of educated people. The first are the excluded or threatened with social marginalisation. The second one, on the other hand, is very broad – it includes communities and societies that also need to be educated and shown how to support excluded people.

65 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/upskilling-adults-45-migrant-background-romania> (accessed on October 25, 2022).

66 https://regalenetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/4.-REGALE_Good-Practice-Ireland-Blossom-Personal-Empowerment.pdf (accessed on October 26, 2022)

4. EDUCATION OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS – GOOD PRACTICES FROM IRELAND, ROMANIA AND POLAND

Lokalny Ośrodek Wiedzy i Edukacji (LOWE) – good practice in Poland

1. LOWE – GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. What is LOWE

Lokalny Ośrodek Wiedzy i Edukacji (LOWE) (The Local Center for Knowledge and Education) is a definition of a new role that schools can play in activating adults and the local community for the development of skills which are the basis for lifelong learning, especially in disadvantaged areas⁶⁷.

1.2. Aims and assumptions of LOWE, main problems in the field of adult education

In Poland, in the field of lifelong learning, we deal with the following phenomena:

- The dominant educational offer for adults is strongly related to formal education in the education system or higher education.
- Offers are inflexible, based on a school approach to the organization of education and they go to people who are better educated and more motivated to constantly learn.
- Often there is no direct link between the acquired skills and their practical use at work or in social activities.

- Educational offers based on a formal approach fail to meet people's needs with low basic skills. The low level of these skills hinders the ability to retrain and update professional qualifications acquired many years ago. Among such people, the lack of professional activity is permanent. This creates a risk of social exclusion that is not limited to these people, but includes their families, especially children, who often inherit their parents' problems.

Basic assumptions of the school's activity as LOWE⁶⁸:

- Learning in different places.
- A large group of LOWE customers.
- LOWE offer tailored to individual needs and to the expectations of the labour market.
- Educational and activating activities should take into account many aspects.
- The school's potential should be used for lifelong learning.
- Demand approach to determining the content of educational offers.

Important LOWE activities related to the idea of lifelong learning include:

- Giving a higher profile to adult learning.
- Developing ways of identifying adult skills needs in local settings.

- Increasing universal access to information and educational and vocational counselling related to educational opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment.
- Introducing adults to different learning and education opportunities.
- Developing flexible educational offers tailored to the needs of adults.
- Development of innovative learning / teaching concepts.
- Spreading universal skills (key competences, including basic skills, especially digital ones).
- Developing integrated forms of support for adults with low qualifications and skills.
- Developing local partnerships for adult skills.
- Developing adult education methods and tools effective in the local community.
- Increasing investment in learning (private and social).

1.3. Legal basis

All tasks to be implemented as part of the LOWE functioning are outlined in the following regulations which form the legal basis of education in Poland:

- Ustawa z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie gminnym (tj. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 506).

67 The Local Center for Knowledge and Education <https://lowe.edu.pl/>

68 The Local Center for Knowledge and Education, LOWE model <https://lowe.edu.pl/model-lowe/>

- Ustawa z dnia 5 czerwca 1998 r. o samorządzie powiatowym (tj. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 511).
- Ustawa z dnia 5 czerwca 1998 r. o samorządzie województwa (tj. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 512).
- Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe (tj. Dz. U. z 2018 r. poz. 996, ze zm.),
- Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. o pomocy społecznej (tj. Dz.U. z 2018 r. poz. 1508, ze zm.).
- Ustawa z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r. o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy (tj. Dz.U. z 2018 r. poz. 1265, ze zm.).

2. PARTNERSHIP

2.1. Goals, benefits, determinant of activities

The main goal of the LOWE partnership is to increase adults' access to various forms of lifelong learning⁶⁹.

The specific goal is to increase the participation of adults in education by activating and involving people who have been educationally inactive so far using the partners' resources, as well as effectively solving social problems resulting from the low level of key competences on the basis of LOWE activities.

The leader of the above-mentioned partnership is the body running the school, and the partnership members are the school where LOWE is located and invited local partners who will declare active participation in the activities of the partnership supporting the ac-

tivities of LOWE. Such a partnership is a platform of cooperation between various partners.

Benefits of a partnership supporting the LOWE model:

- integration of communities and joint activities for the education of adults, local entities, establishing new contacts,
- strong involvement of participants – adults in learning and local partners in meetings, consultations and activities for the support and sustainability of LOWE,
- openness and flexibility, optimism and creating new, innovative solutions in adult learning,
- new forms of cooperation, common vision, mission, clearly defined goal of action in the field of adult lifelong learning
- clearly defined roles of individual partners in the implementation of key education competences for adults in the local community,
- joint diagnosis, planning, implementation and monitoring of educational services for adults,
- focus on action and responsibility for the implementation of tasks by partners,
- clear procedures and rules as well as regulations defining the principles of partnership functioning (partnership agreement),
- creating the synergy effect, i.e., added value, innovation, innovative solutions in the field of adult learning, including the development of key competences and social skills in accordance with individual needs and local specificity based on local resources and potential of partners, involvement of the local community in the issues of adult education,

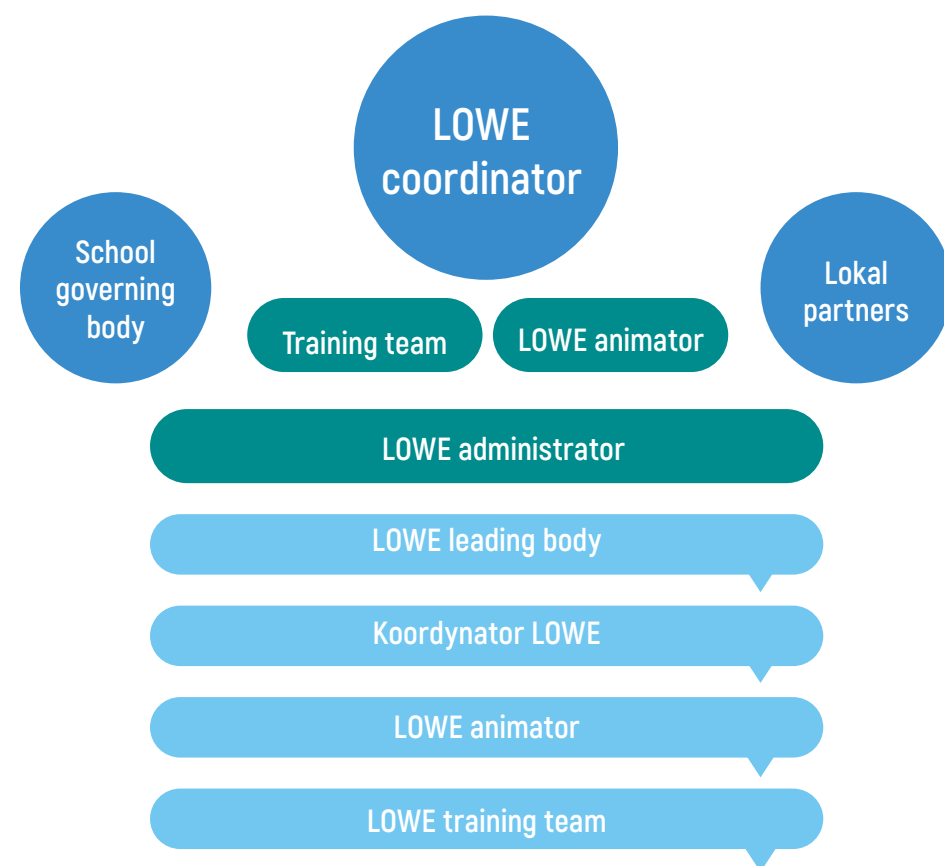
- effective use of local human and institutional resources,
- access to a larger pool of resources from each of the partners, sectors,
- obtaining additional financing from various sources,
- strengthening the existing cross-sectoral cooperation for adult education and education for the needs of the labour market,
- various mechanisms enabling each partner to effectively use their competences and skills to achieve mutual benefits.

Determinants of partnership performance in the LOWE model:

- Agreement of a group of entities acting jointly for adult learning, including the development of key competences and social skills.
- Shared vision, partnership goals, members' responsibility for the partnership and their commitment, openness to other partners in the implementation of the LOWE model in the local community.
- A union of organisations, institutions and entities acting together, having common areas of action and supporting LOWE.
- Conducting permanent and systematic activities using the resources, experiences and services of partner entities.
- Proper use of the potential of individual members and exchange of information between partners implementing the model and environmental partners supporting the implementation of the LOWE model in the local community.

69 Ministry of Education and Science, Local Knowledge and Education Centers (LOWE) <https://efs.mein.gov.pl/realizuje-projekt-w-po-wer/lokalne-osrodki-wiedzy-i-edukacji-lowe/>

2.2. LOWE organisational structure



Source:

Model funkcjonowania LOWE (Lokalnych Ośrodków Wiedzy i Edukacji) w drugim etapie ich rozwoju w latach 2019-2023 https://www.towarzystwoamicus.pl/images/LOWE/DOKUMENTY_REKRUTACYJNE/05.02.2020_z%C5%82_1_opis_modelu_funkcjonowania_LOWE.pdf

COORDINATOR – appointed by the body running the school. The role of the LOWE coordinator is substantive. Within the LOWE structure, the coordinator performs a managerial role.

ADMINISTRATOR – appointed by the body running the school. It is a typical management-supporting function of an administrative nature.

ANIMATOR – appointed by the LOWE Coordinator (in consultation with the body running the school). The LOWE animator supports the coordinator’s work by organising support for LOWE activities for adult learning in the local community.

TRAINING STAFF – its task is to organise, inspire and coordinate the active involvement of local adult residents in social, educational and environmental activities.

3. Creating a LOWE offer

Offers are based on a diagnosis of what skills adults need, what their gaps are, and what can be used in terms of their potential.

3.1. Diagnosis of social problems in the LOWE environment

Proposed method of diagnosis:

- 1. Analysis of existing documents characterising the local community** and its surroundings (eg reports published by PUP, educational and cultural offer) and analysis of documents presenting the region’s development strategy.
- 2. Focus group research with the participation of adults, potential recipients of the LOWE offer.** The aim of the focus group research is to identify the qualitative factors that may significantly determine the degree of activity of adults in non-formal education. The research should serve to develop the educational offer of LOWE. Focus studies make it possible to find out about the dominant attitudes towards education and culture in the local

community and to identify the main expectations and barriers related to participation in adult education. They focus on the existing educational offer or the lack thereof for adults in the local community, own educational needs and previous experience of participating in formal and non-formal education. Focus groups also include suggestions regarding the potential offer of the centre. During their duration, therefore, the existing educational and cultural offer for adults in the region is determined, and the needs of adults in the field of their education are diagnosed and development, and possible limitations and barriers to adult education in LOWE takes place.

- 3. Focus group research with the participation of representatives of local institutions**, i.e., local government authorities, job centres, social centres, community centres, non-governmental organisations, employers. The aim of the research is to identify the competency gaps and educational needs of adults in the local community from the perspective of specialists who know the socio-economic conditions of the region and the main local problems (e.g., the demand for qualifications and competences in a given environment). The aim is also to understand the main barriers that may arise in involving adults in education and to work out ways to counter them. As part of the first stage of the LOWE work, an assessment of the school’s potential (i.e., teachers’ competences in adult education, infrastructure, building relationships with adults representing the local community) should also be carried out in order to plan the actions to be taken and to adapt them to the needs of LOWE functioning.

3.2. Diagnosis of individual educational needs of LOWE recipients.

After diagnosing social problems in the environment, we should proceed to diagnosing the individual educational needs of LOWE recipients. The results of the diagnosis will indicate the categories of people that we should especially invite to participate in LOWE.

Helpful tools in making individual diagnoses:

- Widely available intelligence tests that are objective and easy to use.
- Observation sheets that can be created by LOWE staff and used in the first meetings or in the first hours of planned adult learning activities.
- Raven Matrix Test.
- Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire.
- Questionnaire of Social Competences.
- ICQ-R Interpersonal Competences Questionnaire.

Database of free diagnostic tools:

- <https://zasobyip2.ore.edu.pl/>
- <http://doradztwo.ore.edu.pl/narzedzia-diagnostyczne-dla-doradcow-zawodowych/>
- <http://www.perspektywy3d.pl/index.html>
- <http://www.e-zamek.pl/>
- <http://ibe.edu.pl/pracowniatestow/index.php?d=narzedzia>

3.3. LOWE educational offer

Assumptions of the LOWE offer

The LOWE offer is based on non-formal education and concerns the skills of adults, it is not based on the general education curriculum

and does not prepare directly for taking external examinations in the education system.

- The main place for adult learning is the workplace, including their work post and organised community activities.
- Adults are more willing to use offers organised in shorter cycles that are more practical and responding to their specific needs.
- The Council of the EU adopted a Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways in December 2016. It promotes the application of a three-step procedure for actions for the benefit of these people:
 1. assessment of the skills of people in need of support,
 2. adapting flexible education pathways to the level of these skills,
 3. recognition of learning outcomes acquired outside the education system.

Four elements to ensuring the creation of a good offer:

- **Defining Learning Content** – LOWE has a demand-side approach, so the adult skills need should be assessed as a basis for developing the content of educational offerings.
- **Diagnosis first, offer later!** Diagnosis of adult needs in terms of skills allows to precisely define the educational offer resulting from the diagnosis, as well as the method of its distribution.
- **Motivation of LOWE participants** – The right way of reaching the offer and specific communication can guarantee motivation of potential recipients to take advantage of the offer.
- **The offer is flexible and attractive** – the indirect requirement is to obtain and maintain the attendance of participants as the basis for financing LOWE activities. It is difficult to find time for regular participation in training. Depending on local conditions,

educational activities may take place in different places, not necessarily in school buildings. The attractiveness of the educational offer is also very important, as is the possibility of experiencing an educational adventure in a group of interesting people, in a way that is far from the lessons, homework and tests remembered from youth.

3.4. Recommended features of LOWE activities

- **Format** – This means that it can be freely shaped depending on internal conditions and changes in the situation of the environment.
- **Integrity** – means that key competences needed in the labour market should be shaped inseparably and in conjunction with other elements and assumptions of the model.
- **Experiential learning** – To make this system efficient, four steps have been developed in the experiential learning cycle:
 1. EXPERIENCE. Concrete experience – full commitment in experience in a given place and time.
 2. REFLECTION. Observation and Reflection – Concrete experience prompts reflection that can be made from many different perspectives.
 3. GENERALISATION. Generalisation and creation of abstract hypotheses – this reflection in turn causes drawing general conclusions and creating abstract assumptions, integrating the results of reflection and observation into logical theories.
 4. APPLICATION. Verifying the acquired / developed knowledge or skills in practice, which leads to the creation of new active experiments and the cycle starts from the beginning.

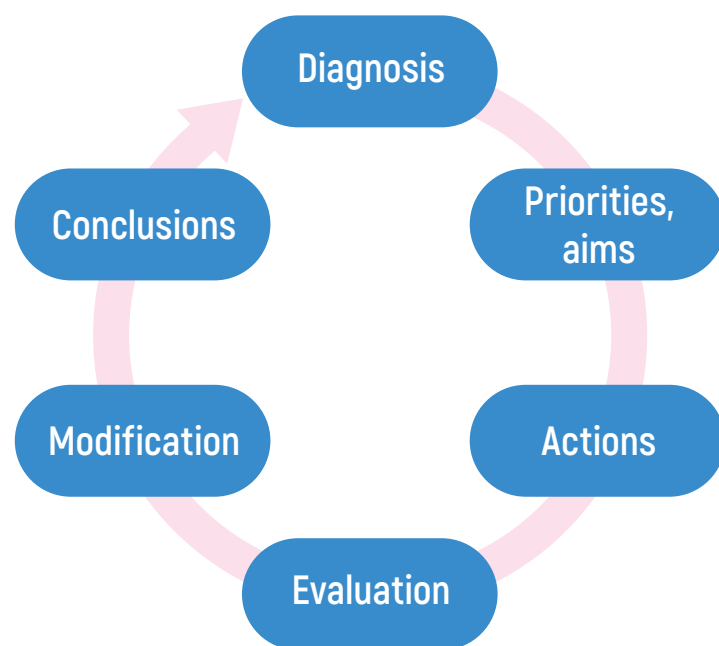
“Life skills” competences – training of social skills – Shaping life competences under LOWE must be integral to key competences and

with various dimensions of everyday life, e.g., agriculture, household budget management, how to effectively find a job, competences for parents and carers, healthy eating, addiction prevention education. Remember that people learn better and more willingly when they are “actors” rather than just “observers.” Therefore, contexts of everyday situations are needed in shaping key competences.

Undercover activities – “hidden workshops” – due to the specificity of LOWE recipients, including in particular people at risk of social exclusion due to addictions or gross deficiencies in basic competences, key competences should be developed that do not highlight these features or deficits.

3.5. Assessment of LOWE activities

Evaluation cycle of the LOWE model



Source: LOWE (Local Knowledge and Education Centers) functioning model in the second stage of its development in 2019 2023
https://www.towarzystwoamicus.pl/images/LOWE/DOKUMENTY_REKRUTACYJ-NE/05.02.2020_z%C5%82_1_opis_modelu_funkcjonowania_LOWE.pdf

The LOWE functioning model should take into account the following factors:

- Relevance – selecting from those areas that are of the greatest importance. The necessary method of evaluating phenomena in terms of their strength of impact and durability in time (trend).
- Prioritisation – selection from the entire set that are of the greatest importance in the given conditions. It is necessary to diagnose prospectively (anticipate phenomena, their dependencies and trends).
- Purposefulness – defining what you want to achieve.
- Relevance – determining the degree of needs and justification for taking specific actions.
- Efficiency – determining the optimal methods of implementation.
- Usefulness – benefits for LOWE participants measured by the improvement of their quality of life, improvement of individual and social comfort, professional and social activity, etc.

4. Recruitment of LOWE participants

Proposed methods of recruiting participants:

- offers of meetings with potential recipients of services in communities,
- information provided to potential recipients of LOWE services by LOWE staff,
- advertisements on the website of the school and local government,
- publications in social networks,
- advertisements in the press,
- distribution of leaflets and posters,

- local TV, radio, local press,
- information provided to students by teachers in the form of an information leaflet,
- information provided at meetings with parents and guardians,
- meetings and information at community centres or job centres,
- cooperation and meetings in important communities and social organisations,
- community centres, local non-governmental organisations operating especially in the field of culture, social integration, local tradition, sports clubs, hobby associations, information at meetings and cyclical events (direct promotion),
- LOWE stands / points at events
- competitions involving students and young people to encourage and promote the LOWE offer among adults,
- activities of local leaders, including councillors, clergy, members of non-governmental organisations, animators and advisers of Social Economy Support Centres, local government authorities,
- regular (e.g., monthly, quarterly) meetings at LOWE or e.g., in community centres,
- information attached and distributed by employees of aid institutions, e.g., social workers, career counsellors, employees of job centres, “demonstration” classes and training for potential LOWE recipients,
- direct meetings with residents, e.g., as part of local events or organising “Open days with LOWE”,
- telephone or personal contact with people active in the community,
- providing information to parents (via e-diaries),
- posters / leaflets displayed at the community centre or local shops,
- the so-called word of mouth marketing.
- direct contact with the local community

5. Good practice in the field of reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities

Providing accessibility for people with disabilities can be viewed from the point of view of the person with a disability in order to define their needs and barriers they face.

Speaking of rational improvements:

- we take into account a specific person with a specific type of disability (e.g., motor, intellectual, auditory) who wants to take part in the activity we carry out,
- we identify a barrier (e.g., architectural, communication) that limits or prevents this person's full active participation in our activities,
- we define the nature of the service (we decide how we can neutralise the barrier).

Examples of rational improvements in overcoming the most common barriers and difficulties related to disability:

- functional assistant to a person with a disability,
- guide dog,
- specialised transport,
- architectural adaptation of buildings,
- assistant translating into easy language,
- sign language interpreter,
- acoustic adjustment of the room,
- audio description,
- adapted computer infrastructure.

Good practice from AESD in Romania

1. "Employment Innovation for Women – Voice for the Community!"

It is a project carried out by the Baia Mare Professional Non-Governmental Association of Social Assistance ASSOC. The project aims to strengthen access to the labour market for women with secondary and higher education throughout the country. The target group of the project is 1100 people, of which 800 women, 150 people from the staff of local and central public authorities, 150 people from civil society organisations.

The activities as part of the project include:

- innovation at the level of sustainable development policy through consolidation / development of the profession of „mimetic-gestural translator” and implementation infrastructure,
- organising a national campaign to raise awareness and promote the professional development opportunities offered by the project,
- recruiting 800 women from the target group,
- conducting an innovative program of professional training in the profession of a sign language interpreter,
- conducting vocational training for 700 women from the target group,
- online professional training in gesture interpretation (e-learning platform) for 100 women,
- vocational training in the field of entrepreneurship for 120 people out of all recruited,
- providing support in promoting entrepreneurship among women,
- creating a network of specialists in this field,
- organising a campaign to make central and local public authorities and society aware of the existence of translators,
- organisation of the National Conference of Translators.

The project contributed to the consolidation of the professional field of mimic-gesture translation and was aimed at increasing access to the labour market for women with secondary and higher education throughout the country through training and stimulating entrepreneurship in this sector. Thanks to the project, 685 women qualified as a "mimic-gesture interpreter" at the national level.

The profession of a sign language interpreter currently has the code COR 516913 and as a result of activities undertaken in this project has been included in the nomenclature of qualifications.

2. Home for the elderly "St. Antim Ivireanul"

Home for the elderly "St. Antim Ivireanul" in Calarasi, has a capacity of 40 beds, a team of social workers, psychologist, doctor, care staff (nurses and carers) and administrative staff. It also has accommodation facilities, i.e. a medical office, administrative offices, a food block (a place for preparing meals and a dining room, also used as an event room). In the inner courtyard of the center there is a green space with benches and flowers, intended for relaxation and recreation.

The beneficiaries of the services offered are dependent elderly people who have / do not have a family or are dependent on a person and they do not have a house or the possibility of ensuring living conditions. Currently, there are 35 beneficiaries in the center.

The initial assessment of beneficiaries is complex and involves the use of a national grid for assessing the needs of older people. In the assessment form drawn up by the multidisciplinary team on admission to the home, the social services that the elderly person will use depending on the identified needs are determined, as well as the date of the next psycho-medical-social reassessment. Reassessment is

performed annually or in the event of significant changes in the physical, mental or social condition of the beneficiary.

Medical records are kept for each beneficiary. The home has signed a contract with two doctors, and the beneficiaries after treatment are still covered by medical care by employees with medical education, according to the recommendations of the family doctor. There is a personalised Care and Assistance Plan for each elderly person that details the goals, steps and actions to be taken, taking into account the data obtained in the initial assessment and documents issued by other specialists.

The services provided to the beneficiaries are:

- social services: administrative counseling, social reintegration in relation to psycho-affective abilities and prevention of marginalisation, organisation of free time, assistance with shopping, etc.,
- socio-medical services: assistance in maintaining and / or regaining physical and intellectual abilities, basic services (assistance in the field of body hygiene, clothing, elimination hygiene, feeding and hydration, transfer and mobilisation, indoor movement, communication),
- medical services: consultations and treatments in specialised medical facilities/medical surgeries , medical care services / outpatient clinics, medical insurance in accordance with the law, etc.

Beneficiaries are encouraged and supported to participate in daily activities at the center in order to maintain their autonomy and independence. The center develops a monthly program of activities to promote active life and organises activities that require minimal physical, mental and intellectual effort (dancing, crafts, games, reading, musical auditions, painting, etc.). Outdoor activities are organised depending on the season.



Source : AESD Association, own photo

The center encourages its beneficiaries to undertake activities outside of the center, to learn about and use the services of the local community depending on individual needs and possibilities:

- mail and communication,
- transport,
- education, medical and rehabilitation services,
- career counseling services,

Family members and friends can visit the beneficiaries, and they are given a special space so that they do not disturb other beneficiaries.

3. The Social Integration. Center („Together for a safe start!”)

The Social Integration Center was established as part of the project „Together for a safe start!” implemented by the Directorate for Social and Medical Assistance (DASM), Cluj-Napoca, Cluj district.

The aim of the project is to develop the capacity for social integration and active involvement of people or families who are socially marginalised or at risk of marginalization and social exclusion, in order to overcome difficult situations by:

- information, career counseling, job placement on the internal market,
- post-project monitoring,
- support in launching projects in the field of social economy and for-profit,
- vocational training or facilitating access to vocational training.

The aims of the project:

- increasing employment of Roma and people with disabilities, as well as other categories of people at risk of marginalisation and social exclusion,
- preventing and limiting the phenomenon of social exclusion of Roma and people with disabilities,
- improving the living and working conditions of Roma and people with disabilities,
- providing solutions to the professional problems of Roma and people with disabilities,
- raising awareness of the importance of vocational education for Roma and people with disabilities,
- guiding Roma and people with disabilities in choosing a profession,
- providing alternative solutions for vocational training for Roma and people with disabilities,
- ensuring access of Roma and people with disabilities to information on professions, industries and professions sought after on the labour market, as well as to information on the possibility of participating in vocational qualification / retraining courses, and on the certification of informally acquired skills,
- ensuring access of Roma and people with disabilities to career counseling and guidance
- creating partnerships and cooperation agreements with associations, trade unions and employers,
- conducting an integrated intervention within the institutional framework of DASM, at the level of the Cluj-Napoca district, respectively, in the field of social inclusion of Roma and people with disabilities as well as other categories of socially marginalised people or people at risk of marginalisation and social exclusion.

The number of beneficiaries of the actions was:

- 531 people, of which 472 Roma and 59 people with disabilities used the information and consulting
- 106 people, of which 57 Roma and 49 people with disabilities benefited from vocational training,
- 111 beneficiaries, of which 79 Roma and 32 people with disabilities were employed on the labour market.

The project also created a database of employers and potential employers, as well as public and private vocational training institutions.

4. "Integrated social services and vocational training for people with disabilities"

The project carried out by the ASSOC Baia Mare Professional Non-Governmental Social Care Association aims to cover 20 managers, 50 people with disabilities, 12 employees of local community, 100 employees of public / private agencies providing social and employment services. The project aims to increase access to the labour market for people with disabilities by creating a formal, education-based framework for assessment, activation, accreditation and accessibility. In order to reach this goal, the project developed a tripartite approach entitled 'triple concept - A' (activation, accreditation, accessibility).

This concept is based on the initial phase of evaluation, functional potential inventory, without which subsequent actions would only generate random and inconsistent results.

The assessment is based on the development of a scientifically valid tool for the objective assessment of functional balance in relation to

the working capacity of people with disabilities.

Activation consists in developing a set of counselling activities for people with disabilities based on the results of the evaluation, with the main emphasis on increasing their motivation for professional and personal development.

Accreditation covers a set of activities focused on vocational training and accreditation of specialists (career guidance counselors of people with disabilities) involved in managing both categories:

- people with disabilities,
- organisations employing people with disabilities.

Vocational guidance counselors for people with disabilities will provide support in the development of professional skills and identify suitable for people with disabilities as appropriate.

Accessibility is aimed at carrying out an information and awareness-raising campaign. It is focused on sensitising and changing the mentality and increasing employers' interest in employing people with disabilities.

The project proposes to develop and implement an adapted model for functional residue (working capacity) assessment and to facilitate training, certification

and employment in the labour market of people with disabilities (physically, mentally, neuromotorally, etc.). An important result of the project is the development of a system for assessing the employment potential of people with disabilities – the Casper test. Assessment increases employability by presenting objective information about skills during an interview.

The implementation of this project benefits the local community through:

- Development of the Vocational Skills Development Center operating in the form of a social enterprise, in which the number of employed people increased from 7 people with disabilities during the project implementation to 12 at present.
- Raise awareness among at least 50,000 people in the community about disability issues.
- Providing certification services for people with disabilities from all counties in the country along with accredited tools for assessing their employment potential and training of at least two specialists from each county.
- Community awareness through CASPER CARAVAN, which directly involved around 50 volunteers who made this campaign a publicized and visible event in every county in Romania.

The Irish National Adult Learning Organisation – AONTAS

The Irish National Adult Learning Organization is an Irish NGO dedicated to promoting and facilitating adult learning. It was founded in 1969 by Fr. Liam Carey from the Institute of Adult Education in Dublin, and its activities were inaugurated by Brian Lenihan TD. Its first chairman was

Sean O'Murchu. It has been a non-governmental organisation since 1976 but receives funding from the Department of Education and Skills⁷⁰.

AONTAS's mission is to stand up for the right of all adults in Ireland to quality life-long learning and to promote the values and benefits of lifelong learning⁷¹. AONTAS in Europe aims to address areas of educational inequality in order to build a cohesive society in Ireland and across Europe, support the implementation of EU education policy and build the image of the adult learning sector. As a national organisation, AONTAS is committed to representing its members' concerns in key forums at national, European and international levels, including the European Association for Adult Education (EAEA), the European Fundamental Skills Network (EBSN) and the International Council on Adult Education (ICAE)⁷².

Adult learning is transformative and has far-reaching benefits at a personal, community and social level. The persistence of educational inequalities in the adult population is unacceptable. As part of the AONTAS plan, they provide members with top-quality work so that adult learners have the opportunity to fulfil their educational aspirations that they deserve so much. According to AONTAS, Societal Education is informal in nature and offers part-time short courses and programs and can therefore be the first positive step towards returning to education. It offers many opportunities for learners and communities, including skills development, confidence building, gre-

ater community involvement, and the transition to further education or employment⁷³.

AONTAS program

- **HEADSUP Kildare** is an interagency program managed by County Kildare Leader Partnership. It supports vulnerable men by implementing a wide range of programs and initiatives across the county. The programs are designed to develop participants' resilience and help them connect with local education, employment and mental health services so that they can get support to improve their life situation. During the HEADSUP program, among others is the WRAP (Wellness, Recovery, Action, Planning) program that enriches knowledge and awareness about one's own mental health. The WRAP process helps you identify tools to maintain your well-being and create action plans so that you can apply them in your daily life.
- **European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL)**⁷⁴ European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) – adult education following the Covid-19 program (2022-2023). AONTAS is the national coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) in Ireland. EAAL aims to strengthen the place of adult learning in Program Countries across Europe. In 2014, AONTAS was nominated by the Irish Department of Education and Skills as National Coordinator for EAAL Implementation. This means that AONTAS facilitates cooperation with other EU Member States and the European Commission to implement an

⁷⁰ The National Adult Learning Organisation http://www.onestepup.ie/assets/files/pdf/aontas_40th_birthday_brochure.pdf

⁷¹ The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, About the strategic plan <https://www.aontas.com/about/strategic-plan>

⁷² The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, AONTAS in Europe <https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/>

⁷³ The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, Community education <https://www.aontas.com/community/community-education-network>

⁷⁴ The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) [https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/european-agenda-for-adult-learning-\(eaal\)](https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/european-agenda-for-adult-learning-(eaal))

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- **The EAAL project**, Inclusive Recovery and Transformation: Adult Learning Post-Covid-19 (2022-2023), started in January 2022. The project is financed by the Erasmus + program of the European Union and co-financed by the Irish Department of Higher and Lifelong Education, Innovative Research and Learning through SOLAS. The main goal of the project is to counteract educational inequalities exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project will include student-centered assessments and activities, effective stakeholder engagement, capacity-building and wellness programs, a community of practitioners for educators, and the development of policy proposals. It will support the implementation of Irish and European adult learning policies, promote and enable lifelong learning, and support marginalised and sensitive learners.
- **The Basic Skills Development Plan Slovakia (BLUESS)**⁷⁵ is a collaboration of partners, including AONTAS, to support the development and implementation of the national strategy for basic adult skills in Slovakia. The project is led by the National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Education (EAAL) in Slovakia, the State

Institute of Vocational Training, with the support of partners, including AONTAS. AONTAS's task is to provide advice and support for international experts as the National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) and as a representative voice on adult learning in Ireland. The project uses collaborative learning and expertise in partnership and is funded by the European Commission's EaSI Up program. Some of the activities so far are study visits in Ireland, during which experts from Slovakia had the opportunity to meet organisations operating in the adult education sector in Ireland. AONTAS staff had the opportunity to attend the project kick-off meeting to share the policy and practice perspectives on basic skills in Ireland and to join discussions on how best to develop basic skills offerings in Slovakia and across Europe.

- **Build Action Mobilise (BAM)** AONTAS is running an Erasmus + KA1 mobility project called Build Action Mobilise (BAM). Mobility projects give organisations the opportunity to build international capacity. They are an excellent way to bring out a European identity by collaborating with colleagues from all over Europe, while developing strengths within the sector. In addition, as an organisation supporting AONTAS in international cooperation with representative bodies such as the European Association for Adult Education (EAEA), the European Fundamental Skills Network (EBSN) and the International Council on Adult Education (ICAE). BAM is a 24-month project involving 10 activities in which the team of employees and the management of AONTAS will take part in courses and study visits and participate in conferences and workshops devoted to various areas of adult learning.

- **FutureLabAE**⁷⁶ is about two main issues: the democratic situation in Europe and the large number of people in Europe who do not have basic skills. This project aims to strengthen educators' ability to deal with the problems arising from the growing number of citizens who distance themselves from the political establishment and lean towards populist and xenophobic politics. The project is also looking at how to tackle the problems posed by the large number of people in Europe who need support in basic skills, including IT skills and to allow them to take full advantage of the digital transformation. FutureLabAE will provide adult education organisations, staff and trainers with:

- ▶ Resources, online courses, and webinars.
- ▶ A space for discussion and learning from each other.
- ▶ Knowledge, experience and tools that will allow them to become more proactive in developing an innovative and change-oriented educational offer.

The partners will develop specific recommendations that will allow policymakers to support the adult education sector in addressing the above-mentioned challenges as well as prepare policy initiatives on digitalisation and democracy.

- **Communicating Europe Initiative (CEI)** is an inclusive adult education program designed to build global citizenship and social cohesion in communities across Ireland. The project aims to build awareness and understanding of the importance of the European Union, the future of Europe and solidarity in society. Adult education plays an active role in sustaining local communities and promoting

75 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, Blueprint for Basic Skills Development in Slovakia (BLUESS) [https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/blueprint-for-basic-skills-development-in-slovakia-\(bluess\)](https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/blueprint-for-basic-skills-development-in-slovakia-(bluess))

76 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, FutureLabAE <https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/future-lab-for-adult-education>

democracy and civic engagement. The program aims to strengthen the capacity of adult educators and the adult learning community by creating new knowledge in areas of solving key social problems that threaten communities, such as false information, racism and anti-vaccine rhetoric. The aim of this program is to counteract the policy of fear in Ireland and build social cohesion and:

- ▶ determine the importance of Irish solidarity and cooperation in the European Union,
 - ▶ recognise false information, “fake news” and motives behind right-wing populist propaganda,
 - ▶ understand the public health impact and importance of vaccines, and the scientific methods and ethical procedures involved in approving them.
 - ▶ identify racism, discrimination and the negative impact of “otherness”,
 - ▶ discuss the impact and values of democracy and social engagement in local communities, Irish society and European cooperation.
- **Bildung**⁷⁷ is an Erasmus + Key Action 2 project that enables organisations from different countries participating in a joint project to work together to develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the field of education, training and youth. BILDUNG stands for “Building Inclusive Lifelong Learning Systems

by Developing a European Understanding of Bildung for the Next Generations”. The project aims to investigate “Bildung” as a key approach to adult learning and education that responds to current political, social and economic challenges such as climate change, changes in democratic participation as well as low levels of digital and basic skills among the inhabitants of Europe. The Bildung project aims to equip people with the personal, interpersonal and social skills they need to become active citizens.

- **TO SWITCH**⁷⁸; The TO SWITCH project – Towards Senior workers’ Innovative Training Challenges – brings together a network of partners from seven European countries and aims to support educators, training tutors, trainers and mentors who work directly with older workers. The project aims to meet the challenges of the aging population and the transformation of the labour market by enhancing the role of lifelong learning in order to provide adult learners with the skills necessary to participate in the labour market and gain the benefits of the digital transformation.
- **The RegALE**⁷⁹ (Regional capacity for Adult Learning and Education) project aims to strengthen the network of adult education organisations and create synergies with regional and local authorities to increase their impact and sustainability. The objectives are to be achieved by increasing the capacity of partners and their networks, stakeholders, partners and members to meet challenges,

build collaborative structures and promote an adult education culture in communities, cities and regions across Europe.

Stories of participants participating in the programs

Damien's story⁸⁰

I learned how to maintain and nurture mental health using wellness techniques and strategies such as mindfulness, trigger recognition, and the power of sharing. Using these methods, I was able to build my own immunity. The program also introduced me to strategies for setting personal goals, the importance of clear goal definition and taking responsibility for achieving them. It also taught me how to deal with failure, and the importance of having a plan to deal with such failure. The program made me realise how important it is to act for yourself and accept the fact that sometimes you have to fight for what is good for you.

- QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) course, ITEC Gym instruction course

77 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, Bildung <https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/bildung>

78 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, TO SWITCH <https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/toswitch>

79 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, RegALE <https://www.aontas.com/european/european-projects/regale>

80 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, I am heading into my sixty fifth year of life and still learning how to live <https://www.aontas.com/learner-stories/i-am-heading-into-my-sixty-fifth-year-of-life-and-still-learning-how-to-live>

Carmen's story ⁸¹

In a year and a half, I have learned a great deal in areas ranging from nutrition, anatomy, exercise, fitness, gym training, coaching, word processing, communication, and personal and professional development. To find out more about how I learn best, I completed the VARK questionnaire on the VARK website and found out that I am a very strong auditory learner. It makes sense to me because I like to talk about everything, even if it's only talking to myself. High school was difficult for me because the main way of teaching was reading and writing.

- QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) course, ITEC Gym instruction course

Anna's story ⁸²

I think a supportive environment is extremely important for adults in their education. This is important for anyone of any age, but for an adult who has taken a break from school, it can be difficult to get back into routine and such support is crucial to your success.

I've always enjoyed learning, never had a problem staying in a school environment, but unfortunately, I had to leave school at 17 due to severe anxiety and depression. It was a difficult time for me,

and I doubted myself very much. I've always had good grades and wanted to go to college. I took two years off and spent most of that time in London trying to figure out what to do next. I returned to college at the age of 19. Adult education allowed me to realise my true potential and gain confidence in my abilities. When I first returned to education at the age of 19, I doubted myself very much and was not at all sure of myself.

At one point, I was afraid that I would quit my studies again. Fortunately, I was able to focus on learning in the supportive and inviting environment, and from then on, everything happened very quickly.

It was a difficult journey, but the prizes were worth it. I have created and used opportunities that I would never have thought of. Thanks to adult education, I was able to change my life. Actions speak louder than words. That is why it is so important to work on the inclusion of all minority groups. So many people come to Ireland with good qualifications and willingness to work, but do not always know what their opportunities are and as a result they are wasting their potential. Developing a strategy to reach out to these groups can be a catalyst for many great things, not only for these people but for society as a whole.

- Cork College of FET Morrison's Island Campus

Kayla's story ⁸³

Kayla's story was presented at the AONTAS 2022 Adult Learning Youth Festival. The festival emphasised that everyone can #LearnYourWay (learn in their own style), at their own pace, in their own community. Project participants spoke at the "Learners as Leaders" event on Wednesday 9 March 2022 to celebrate and promote the value of returning to education in adulthood.

Adult education is a completely different world. The courses are structured in such a way that you gradually complete assignments and pass small exams that add up to the overall mark for each module, which is quite different from the formal education system, where it all adds up to one large exam in each subject. This solution was much better for me. Adult education allows you to take responsibility for your own learning and you are treated as if your opinion is valued. We were encouraged to criticise and suggest how best to modify teaching methods to get the best out of the course and for future learners. The learning environment is also completely different, in a good sense. The teachers, while still maintaining a certain level of professionalism, become almost friends and really want you to do well and achieve your goals. Sometimes I sat there for lunch, had tea and I was talking to my teacher about something unrelated to the course.

81 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, We all have different learning styles, but can excel when our educational and learning needs are met <https://www.aontas.com/learner-stories/we-all-have-different-learning-styles,-but-can-excel-when-our-educational-and-learning-needs-are-met>

82 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, Great things can come from taking that first step <https://www.aontas.com/learner-stories/great-things-can-come-from-taking-that-first-step>

83 The Voice of Adult Learning Organisation, Adult education allows you to take charge of your own learning and you are treated as a person with a valued opinion <https://www.aontas.com/learner-stories/adult-education-allows-you-to-take-charge-of-your-own-learning-and-you-are-treated-as-a-person-with-a-valued-opinion>

5. COMPETENCES OF EDUCATORS OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

The development of adult education has accompanied us for over two centuries. Andragogy has developed its own foundations, highlighting the differences in the approach to teaching of children and adults. Thus, educators need specific skills, especially when dealing with vulnerable people – socially, digitally excluded or discriminated against.

Adult education in Europe began to take shape in the early 19th century and it was related to promoting learning how to read and write. In turn, overseas, at that time, emphasis was placed on activities that accelerated the integration of immigrants. In the third decade of the nineteenth century, both the Old Continent and North America developed, among others: The Enlightenment movement, reading societies, city libraries, museums and institutes run for adults (e.g., Franklin in Philadelphia, and Lowell in Boston). As they all had their own names and basics of functioning, the term andragogy, coined in 1833 (analogous to pedagogy, literally meaning “lead a man”), did not meet with general interest. The author, the German educator Alexander Kapp⁸⁴, did not propose a definition, so we had to wait almost a century to develop his idea.

The world heard about andragogy once again in 1921 thanks to Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy⁸⁵. A Berlin-born social philosopher, he emphasised that adult education requires special teachers, methods and philosophies, collectively referred to by him as andragogy. In the same year,

Rosenstock co-founded the Akademie der Arbeit, which he later headed. The center, as the first German academy for working people, is still active today and provides education in the fields of social policy, economy and labour law. Its goal is to better prepare employees to function in business and public life.

Principles of adult learning

The scientific basis of andragogy in the second half of the twentieth century was presented by Malcolm Shepard Knowles⁸⁶, an American adult educator. According to his proposal, adult education rests on two foundations: learners are independent, autonomous and take responsibility for their own decisions; while teachers facilitate learning and not present the content.

Knowles made assumptions about the design of such science. According to him, adults:

- need to know why they should learn the topic,
- have to learn experimentally,
- should approach learning as problem-solving,
- learn best when the topic brings direct value,
- react better to internal than external motivation.

UNESCO definition

Adult education is the entirety of educational processes, regardless of the content, level and methods, continuing or supplementing education [...] through which adults develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical and professional qualifications or acquire a new profession. Adults change their attitudes and behaviours in terms of comprehensive personality shaping and participation in sustainable and independent social and cultural development.

As a result of the work of the Third International Conference on Adult Education, held in Tokyo in 1972, four years later UNESCO prepared a recommendation that it defined as the entirety of educational processes, regardless of the content, level and methods, continuing or supplementing education [...] thanks to which adults develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical and profes-

⁸⁴ ERIC, Alexander Kapp--The First Known User of the Andragogy Concept <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1169580>

⁸⁵ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund <https://www.erhfund.org/>

⁸⁶ elearning Industry, The Adult Learning Theory – Andragogy – of Malcolm Knowles <https://elearningindustry.com/the-adult-learning-theory-andragogy-of-malcolm-knowles>

nal qualifications or acquire a new profession. Adults need to change their attitudes and behaviour in terms of comprehensive personality shaping and their participation in sustainable, independent, social and cultural development⁸⁷:

Joanna Kukier in the article entitled "UNESCO's key activities in the field of lifelong learning"⁸⁸ refer to the basic goals and problems of adult education, which were clarified in 1976. Among them we can find:

- facilitating the understanding of contemporary social changes,
- promoting participation in social development,
- skilful use of knowledge and selection of sources,
- continuous development, improving qualifications,
- effective work life balance
- appropriate use of media and information.

Disadvantaged adults

Adult education should take into account the skills already acquired, the ability to function in the modern world or the environment in which adults operate. When these factors are taken into account, it is easier to identify people in a disadvantaged situation, i.e., experiencing poverty, social exclusion or discrimination in many dimensions or at risk of these phenomena. The term "disadvantaged groups" is adopted by

the European Parliament and the Council of the EU in the Regulation establishing the European Social Fund Plus⁸⁹.

In the same document, EU institutions detail the objectives of the ESF + to help improve the situation of disadvantaged individuals, such as increasing access to employment and activation measures for all job-seekers, promoting equal access to education systems (also in the field of adult education), and social inclusion.

As UNESCO highlights, the sustainable society development requires that no one be left behind. Including adults from disadvantaged groups in education will help meet the goals of combating climate change as well as reducing poverty. The organisation in the report "Global Report on Adult Learning and Education"⁹⁰ proposes a set of activities that prioritise the needs of people at risk of exclusion. The report mentions the following courses:

- reading,
- writing,
- modern foreign languages,
- skills validation mechanisms.

Furthermore, the report stresses the need to develop literacy in families, mainly by supporting parents so that they can help their children in the future and develop a culture of learning. It is important to

develop a system of non-financial incentives, but directly influencing the improvement of the socio-economic situation – UNESCO opts for shopping vouchers, paid holidays or career development opportunities.

Types of education of adults from disadvantaged groups

Ellen Boeren, Susan Whittaker and Sheila Riddell propose seven types of adult learning for disadvantaged adults in the project 'Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive and Vibrant Europe'⁹¹:

- **Skills and Basic Education** – This category refers to adult learning at primary and early secondary levels, with the aim of laying the foundations for further learning, employment in low-skilled jobs, and social inclusion.
- **Second chance education at upper secondary level** – at this stage, adults have the opportunity to prepare for higher education and get a better job.
- **Vocational education and training** – to prepare for employment in a specific profession or sector.
- **Work experience** – should make it easier for employees to specialise through dual education, covering both theoretical and practical training in a specific job/workstation.

87 Stopińska-Pajak A., 2005 "Adult education for a common world" - the participation of Poles in international andragogical cooperation (first half of the 20th century) <https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Chowanna/Chowanna-r2005-t2/Chowanna-r2005-t2-s126-140/Chowanna-r2005-t2-s126-140.pdf>

88 Kukier J., 2019, Key activities of UNESCO in the field of lifelong learning Cognitive Science and Media in Education https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/kim/2019_1/kim2019104.pdf

89 European Parliament, European Social Fund Plus <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/pl/sheet/53/europejski-fundusz-spoleczny-plus>

90 UNESCO, Global Report – GRALE <https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/global-report>

91 European Commission, Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive and Vibrant Europe, Horizon 2020 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/693989>

- **Active labour market policies** – are a type of state activity focused on the unemployed, threatened with unemployment or people in need of support looking for a job. They cover initiatives such as on-the-job training, co-financing job creation, as well as retraining courses and finding employment in sectors struggling with staff shortages.
- **On the job learning** – disadvantaged people who are employed can learn in the workplace, improving the qualifications of their profession.
- The last category concerns **personal and social learning**, which is usually not formal and focuses on empowerment, social activity as well as personal development.

Adult motivations and trainers who can empower them

According to the aforementioned Knowles, motivation in adults is more often internal than external. Hence, they are unlikely to expect rewards such as money or praise. Self-realisation, willingness to develop, satisfy curiosity or belonging to a group are more important factors when it comes to adult motivation. Despite this, external issues (such as a raise at work) are not ignored.

With this in mind, Knowles proposed a model for the traits and skills of educators who can motivate adults⁹². He put them in four categories:

- specialist knowledge,
- empathy,
- enthusiasm,
- transparency.

A trainer with the appropriate competences who knows their specialisation, is able to adjust the level of difficulty to the level of students' development, and is involved during classes, which is expressed through their body language, emotions and energy. Moreover, the trainer is organised and has the ability to structure knowledge.

Competences of adult educators

As we read in guides based on German, Romanian, Spanish, Greek and Dutch experiences in adult education, people have a natural tendency to learn, and the role of trainers is to awaken it⁹³. This requires building a positive learning environment, helping to define learning goals, balancing intellectual and emotional aspects, not imposing one's own views, focusing on specific issues and providing feedback at all stages of learning.

In adult training programs, participants should first and foremost be considered responsible. It is worth involving them in developing the training structure as well as introducing self-assessment tools to check progress in education. The next hints for adult education from the experts relate to creating an atmosphere of free speech, using

the experiences of participants and emphasising the specific benefits of participating in the training.

Education of disadvantaged groups

Australian scholars Bruce Burnett and Jo Lampert point out in the publication "Teacher Education and the Targeting of Disadvantage"⁹⁴ that educators of people in disadvantaged groups should be distinguished above all by exceptional commitment and the value of working with groups at risk of exclusion (we could call this characteristic a 'calling'). In addition, it is worth having experience in dealing with disadvantaged people or coming from disadvantaged/ difficult backgrounds and upbringings ourselves.

The basis of empathy

Educators who work with people with physical or mental health needs, adults in a difficult socio-economic situation, women experiencing domestic violence, as well as seniors, must focus on empathy in order to understand their students. It is also necessary to listen actively, build trust, as well as the ability to break down barriers and stereotypes about people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are vulnerable. Without these characteristics of the educator, adults entering education may become discouraged, especially if they

92 Mikołajczyk K. New trends in adult education, Center for Education Development <https://www.ore.edu.pl/wp-content/plugins/download-attachments/includes/download.php?id=6324>

93 Upskilling adults 45+ with migrant background. Inspirations, Considerations, Suggestions. Handbook developed by adult educators in Romania, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Spain, <https://upskilling.ilabour.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Handbook.pdf>

94 Burnett B., Lampert J., Teacher Education and the Targeting of Disadvantage, DOI: 10.4236/ce.2011.25064 <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=8856>

struggled with fear and shame before starting their education.

Experts from the University of West Alabama⁹⁵ in the context of people with special educational needs emphasise the importance of flexibility and compliance with professional standards in all situations. In their opinion, the ability to assess students' strengths and suggest the best development paths is crucial. Patience and keeping order are also very important: a place of learning without chaos gives a sense of comfort and security.

Teaching of low qualified people

The second chance education program in Cyprus⁹⁶ shows that for low educated people, empowerment, which goes beyond simply enhancing job opportunities, is key. It is important to provide competences that facilitate functioning at all levels; personal, family and social level. Program participants emphasised the importance of relationships with teachers and the importance of emotional, psychological and counselling support.

The Cypriot case study authors point out that the ability to create supportive relationships and a safe environment is crucial for educators

of low-qualified people. At the same time, they point out that this is an area that requires a lot of improvement, because trainers often lack empathy towards their students. On the other hand, educators need to maintain a balance because an uncritical approach to learners can prevent further empowerment – students may read it as a signal that the status quo is worth keeping.

Organisations from Spain, Italy, Slovenia and Cyprus that led the LearnersMot⁹⁷ project to promote the use of IT by low-qualified adults emphasise the need for learning by 'doing' i.e., practical activities, group learning and community building. They emphasise, like the participants in the Cypriot initiative, the importance of the relationship between participants and educators. The LearnersMot initiative showed teachers how to use technology to facilitate learning how to listen, speak, read, write, and improve cognitive and communication skills. Thus, it facilitated the solution of the problem of digital exclusion.

Projects implemented in Poland

Social empowerment has become the essence of the Local Government Activity Program in Lublin⁹⁸. The local government helped in the development of social and community, including through meetings

with the local community, at which participants decided on how to use and spend public money given to the local government.

The initiative of professional activation of the unemployed was undertaken Powiatowy Urząd Pracy in Białogard⁹⁹ (an equivalent of a job centre), which advised 150 people on career planning and offered career guidance counselling, job placements or work experience, as well as training and certification. Some of the participants could use the money to start a new business. On the other hand, the authorities of Elbląg¹⁰⁰ adapted to their needs the 5-stage model recommended by the European Union of Supported Employment with the support of the long-term unemployed. As a result, 80% of the participants of the project found a job, and 90% of them remained employed after 15 months. Moreover, the project's study highlighted the health and psychosocial sources of problems that long term unemployed people suffer with.

The Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Foundation focused on the difficult situation of women and organised a project entitled "The initiative is a woman. The ABC of Entrepreneurship for Women"¹⁰¹. It is important to mention that out of the 323 participants, 242 later started their own companies.

95 UWA Online, Qualities Of A Special Education Teacher <https://online.uwa.edu/infographics/qualities-of-a-special-ed-teacher/>

96 Papaioannou E., Empowering vulnerable adults through second-chance education: a case study from Cyprus, International Journal of Lifelong Education <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2018.1498140>

97 LearnersMot <http://www.learnersmot.eu/>

98 Lublin City of Inspiration <https://lublin.eu/lublin/aktualnosci/wspoldecyduj-o-przyszlosci-swojej-dzielnicy,2983,66,1.html>

99 European Commission, 2020, Career advice and support for companies <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=pl&projectId=3660>

100 European Commission, 2014, Elbląg has a new way to deal with long-term unemployment <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=pl&projectId=1083>

101 Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, Map of EU Subsidies <https://mapadotacji.gov.pl/projekty/552252/>

An example of adult education in the world – the literacy of the Irish

From 2014 to 2020, Ireland had an extensive adult literacy program¹⁰². Thanks to it, 50,000 adults improved their reading and writing skills. Participation resulted in increased self-confidence as well as more frequent participation in social and political life. The impetus for action was a study in which the results showed that 1 in 6 adults have reading difficulties. It found that even more people struggled with basic maths.

In July 2021, the Irish government proposed a 10-year strategy to develop adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The goal is to build a fully inclusive and just society and economy. The authors point out that literacy is the basis for ensuring a good quality of life. Additionally, it is crucial for acquiring competences related to mathematics or new technologies. The implementation of the document's assumptions is to contribute to the maintenance of the labour market of 300,000 people in Ireland who do not have secondary education, as well as

900,000 adults who finished education at a school level. It is worth noting that the project is ambitious, as it concerns almost a quarter of the country's inhabitants.

Why don't adults find time to learn?

As the OECD shows in the Skills Outlook 2021 report¹⁰³, young adults learn more willingly if they took the right examples from home, hence engaging groups at risk of exclusion in education is important to break the chain of dysfunction and poverty.

The UK Ministry of Education has identified significant barriers to adult learning. In the report titled "Barriers to learning"¹⁰⁴, the ministry highlights 6 main obstacles to development:

1. cost,
2. childcare,
3. lack of information on learning opportunities,
4. lack of professional support in the field of continuing education,

5. lack of a diversified offer for the elderly,
6. lack of support from employers.

The authors of the publication also emphasise that it rarely happens that the barriers appear individually – they usually overlap, which makes it difficult to channel the support.

In the context of the above-mentioned barriers, the Finnish administration pointed out that it is most difficult for employers to support employees without qualifications¹⁰⁵. Since their work is easily replaced or even automated, they lack a bargaining chip in negotiations with people running businesses.

Additional difficulties are associated with daily duties, difficulties with time management, lack of motivation, but also insufficient self-confidence. Among disadvantaged people there are obstacles related to shame, as well as limited access to education, which may result, from difficulties in mobility or due to the lack of competences needed to undertake distance learning.

102 European Commission, 2020, Thousands now have greater access to adult Education <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=3917>

103 OECD, 2021, OECD Skills Outlook 2021 <https://www.oecd.org/education/oecd-skills-outlook-e11c1c2d-en.htm>

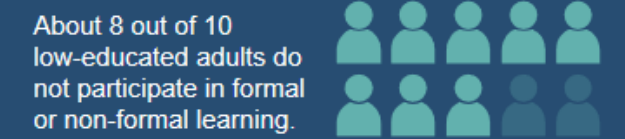
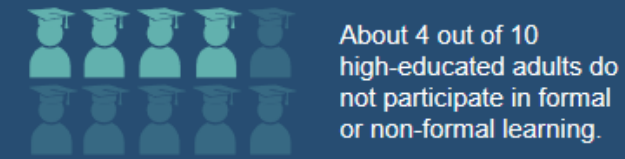
104 Department of Education of UK, 2018, Barriers to learning for disadvantaged groups, Report of qualitative findings August 2018 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/735453/Barriers_to_learning_-_Qualitative_report.pdf

105 OECD, Improving learning participation of adults with low skills <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/07d987ba-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/07d987ba-en>

Infographic

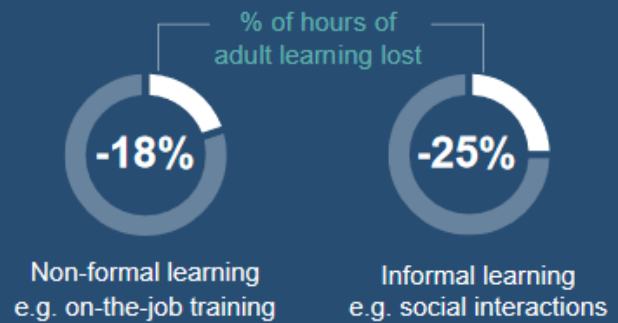
Key facts and figures

Many adults do not participate in learning, especially among the low-educated



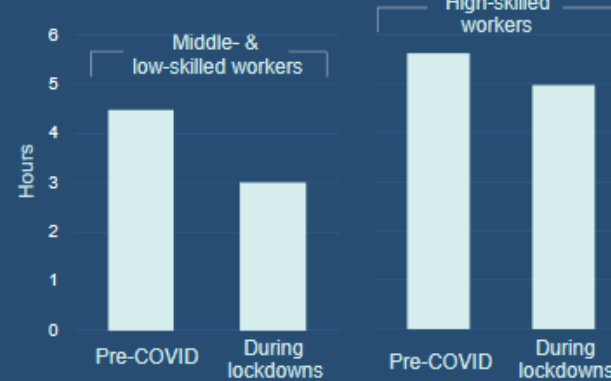
Hours of adult learning dropped during widespread COVID-19 lockdowns

Estimated hours lost during widespread lockdowns in 2020/2021



Drop in adult learning worse for middle- and low-skilled workers

Estimated weekly hours of informal learning per worker OECD average

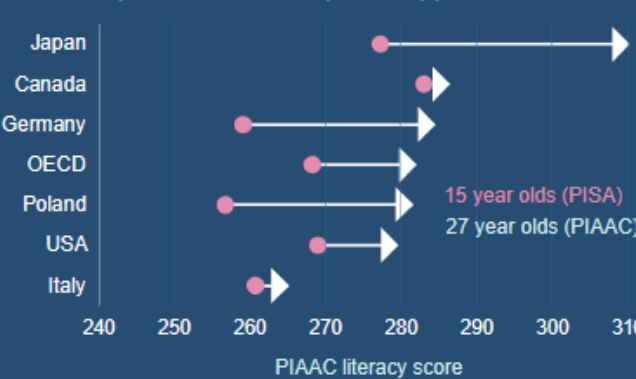


Fall in job vacancies varied depending on required education level



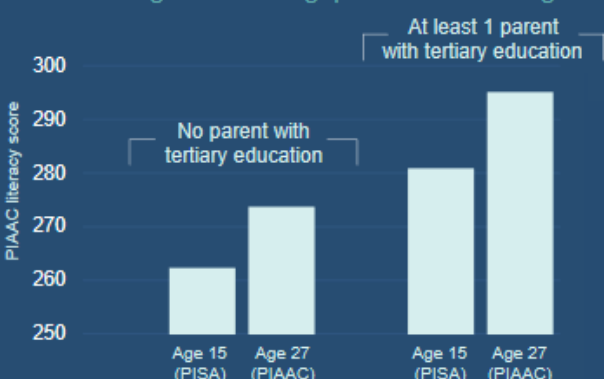
Skill development is uneven during the key transition years

Low growth in literacy achievement between age 15 and 27 puts future development opportunities at risk



Socio-economic disadvantages hamper skills at school and in transition years

Disadvantaged children generally have lower literacy scores at age 15 and the gap is even wider at age 27



Source: OECD (2021), OECD Skills Outlook 2021: Learning for Life, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0ae365b4-en>

6. HOW TO INSPIRE ADULTS TO LEARN IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD?

Adult learning is a response to demographic and globalisation challenges. At the same time, many people, after completing formal education, especially those with low qualifications, do not decide to raise the level of their competences. Therefore, we have looked at the roles that educators play and the methods they can use to convince adults to participate in courses or training.

UNESCO and the Council of Europe¹⁰⁶, take the position that adult learning serves to equip them with the necessary skills to exercise rights and to take control of their own destiny. Learning promotes professional and personal development and supports greater activity of adults in the areas of the environment, community and society. In addition, it promotes social inclusion and the creation of jobs. Learning also prevents poverty, improves health and well-being and contributes to building sustainable communities.

Adults with educational support should be able to develop their potential, career, play an active role in society and fulfil their professional, social and citizen duties. These activities should be supported by educational and vocational guidance counselling and a coherent system of adult education, which uses the substantive and financial support of public institutions.

Adult learning

The American teaching method theorist David A. Kolb, born in the 1930s, proposed 4 phases of the adult learning cycle:

1. Experience (Something happened)
2. Reflection (What happened? How was it?)
3. Generalisation (Why did this happen?)
4. Application (How to use it in practice?)

Each adult has their own learning style, which is determined by the previous educational experiences gained at subsequent levels of education, the social and cultural context of the family in which they functioned, as well as the patterns taken over from peers and co-workers, and the media used to acquire knowledge.

It is also worth noting that low educated people lack the habit of reflecting on their own strategies and perspectives. Therefore, educators should make a good diagnosis of the level of learners in order to best adapt teaching to the needs of students, which in turn will improve their results.

In adult education, being an educator does not end with providing knowledge and checking to what extent it has been assimilated. Educators perform at least 6 roles, within which they carry out their tasks¹⁰⁷:

- **A trainer** conducting courses, workshops, training focused on the practice and improvement of skills, as well as motivating to implement the newly acquired competences into practice.
- **A mentor** who supports, facilitates and encourages independent work. Cooperation with a mentor, takes place in three phases – joint learning planning, support in achieving goals and self-development. The mentor is interested in the development of the mentees in the long and broader perspective.
- **A coach** focused on change rather than on achievements. The coach analyses the learning process, provide feedback and, together with the students, look for ways to increase the effectiveness of activities.
- **An advisor** who helps you understand the problem better and gives tips on how to perceive and deal with challenges. The role of the advisor is especially important in non-formal education, where adults are more open, they ask for advice more often and share their experiences and concerns.
- **Facilitator** increasing the efficiency of group work by moderating discussions and efficient intervention in the event of a conflict. These are people who are not substantively involved and remain neutral towards the issues raised – they do not present their own point of view. Thanks to this, they give the group a chance to develop solutions on their own.
- **Consultant / therapist / tutor.**

¹⁰⁶ e-mentor.edu.pl, 2019, Priorities and social functions of education in adulthood - the perspective of the UNESCO 2030 Sustainable Development Goals <https://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artukul/index/numer/78/id/1399>

¹⁰⁷ E. Mazurek, T. Stępień, 2017, A compendium of necessary knowledge for an adult educator, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Wrocław

Challenges for educators

Regardless of the role taken, the educator faces many problems in terms of students. Facing them is easier if the educator has andragogy background or experience in adult education. Examples of student problems: vaguely defined goals of learning, the baggage of experiences of students which influence their approach to education and the way of learning, habits, fears related to taking up new challenges, low self-esteem and the related lack of self-confidence and the possibility of change.

Let's also look at the aspects that adult educators should consider when planning work.

Strengthening internal motivation

Internal motivation in adult learning is crucial. Much more often than the external one, it guarantees subsequent success. Therefore, it is worth working on it from the very beginning by clearly defining the purpose of teaching, indicating the exact scope of the material and a detailed explanation of how to use the knowledge. Without this, students may skip specific elements of the course, considering them unnecessary.

Individual approach

Different experiences, age and where people come from make it necessary to put the greatest emphasis on individual approach in adult education. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct classes in the smallest possible groups so that each participant has the opportunity to ask a question and be heard while sharing their comments and opinions. Adult educators may often come across people in their groups who

act in accordance with their well-established patterns and habits of thinking, are not open-minded and express dissatisfaction with the classes. Hence, it is good to use new teaching techniques that will more easily break students from their patterns such as discussions, simulation exercises and Oxford-style debates. Practicing them gives the students a chance to change their thinking or at least be more open to other views.

Planning work with active time between classes

Another principle of working with adults is to prepare the classes in such a way that the time between them remains active in terms of education. Thanks to the fact that work starts during the meeting and ends long after it, adults will have time to reflect and work through everything that happened during the class. Therefore, the topics discussed should not be completely rewritten and closed. This will make the participants prepare for the next meetings while reflecting on the solutions.

Separating the person from the process

Educators should integrate the control and evaluation of the teaching process. At the same time, in the assessment, they should separate the person-related issues from the action process. In addition, the analysis must concern not only the level of performance of the task, but also the change that has occurred in the performance of a particular student.

How to get adults interested in learning?

Adults are more likely to enter education if:

- They know about the benefits of education,

- learning gives them satisfaction,
- they are treated as independent people, because then they feel empowered
- they know the purpose of learning – this aspect translates into better results,
- education has a task-oriented mode, i.e., it focuses on problems, facilitates testing of the acquired knowledge,
- learning happens through experience and theory does not take up much space in the education process,
- they are treated with respect.

Tips for educators

Adult educators have a real challenge ahead of them, so they should take into account some basic principles at work:

- Create a comfortable learning environment,
- emphasise the usefulness of the training in solving the students' problems,
- provide practical examples and involve students in role-play,
- refer the content to the needs – use material that can be applied in practice,
- start new topics with concepts already known to students,
- do not give typical lectures,
- use different training methods,
- encourage the sharing of ideas,
- encourage and answer questions,
- collect feedback and act on it,
- provide feedback to your students.

Knowledge sharing culture within an organisation

In the context of adult learning, learning within an organisation, e.g. in the workplace, is an important aspect. Better employee skills translate into higher productivity of the enterprise. Hence, it is worth building a culture of sharing knowledge. According to the publication “Adult Learning Professions in Europe and Studies on Trainers in Vocational Education and Training”¹⁰⁸, three groups of factors promote knowledge sharing:

- individual, such as motivation, support, as well as stimulating the collection, dissemination, transfer and application of knowledge,
- organisational, i.e., a structure conducive to the flow of knowledge, as well as creating processes and securing resources that help to carry out the continuous learning process. In this area, it is important to clearly communicate the goals of the organisation and the inclusion of knowledge sharing in the strategy,
- technological, i.e., the use of new technologies to facilitate the sharing of knowledge with anyone who may need it.

The sources of barriers in these three areas may be of a different nature. However, knowing them is helpful in building a culture based on lifelong learning. As for the knowledge itself, the obstacle in acquiring it are ambiguities resulting from the complexity of issues and diffi-

culties in proving them. In the context of the source of knowledge (e.g., educator), the obstacle may be a lack of motivation to learn and credibility. Lack of motivation is also a problem for the recipients, as are difficulties in taking in the knowledge surrounding new terms or issues. In terms of context, the barrier is the environment that is not adapted for good transfer of knowledge and the hostile relationship between the recipients of knowledge and educators.

Stimulating learning in the workplace

The European Commission¹⁰⁹ has proposed a number of activities to support learning in the workplace. The first is about encouraging employers to adopt a learning culture. The next relates to ensuring that the actions of employees in the organisation will ultimately translate into lifelong learning through guidance and knowledge validation systems and securing long-term commitments by employees and employers.

According to the European Commission, it is also necessary to effectively coordinate the stakeholders and agree on the roles and responsibilities of individual system participants. The Commission also places emphasis on communication – providing information on the need for adult education should be carried out through messages understandable to employers and employees. There is also a need for a sustainable system of co-financing, ensuring that workplace lear-

ning is tailored to the needs of adult learners and meets the expectations of employers. In addition, effective monitoring and an evaluation system are essential to ensure that learning in organisations is useful and effective.

Remote learning in a post pandemic world

If we look for the positive dimensions of the COVID – 19 pandemic, recognising the value of remote learning is one of them. Students assessed that during distance education they could save time and flexibly plan work and breaks¹¹⁰. Moreover, some claimed that remote lectures reduced the distance between them and the teachers and the rest of the group. This resulted in greater involvement, more frequent asking and answering of questions, better understanding and assimilation of knowledge than in the case of traditional lecture in a large auditorium.

On the other hand, during remote classes, particular attention should be paid to the technical capabilities of students (the necessary equipment and internet connection) and organisational aspects (the possibility of preparing a place by a student so that they can work for independently and concentrate on their work).

108 European Commission, 2008, ALPINE – Adult Learning Professions in Europe A study of the current situation, trends and issues https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/MumAE/adultprofreport_en.pdf

109 PARP, An analysis of how adults learn in the workplace https://www.parp.gov.pl/storage/publications/pdf/Analiza-sposobw-uczenia-si-doroslych_WCAG.pdf

110 Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Science in times of a pandemic <https://pwr.edu.pl/uczelnia/aktualnosci/nauka-w-czasach-pandemii-11718.html>

Adult Learning Action Plan

The European Commission has developed an Adult Learning Action Plan to strengthen the adult education sector. The five key challenges that were formulated were¹¹¹:

- Quality assurance,
- recognition and validation of learning outcomes,
- investing in the aging population and migrants,
- removing barriers to participation,
- setting indicators and benchmarks.

Demographic changes, globalisation and the fight against unemployment are the reasons why increasing the participation of adults in training and vocational education is one of

major policy goals for both the EU and individual Member States. Raising the level of knowledge, skills and qualifications increases competitiveness on the labour market and in turn increases employability.

Data for Europe

Adult participation in extra-curricular education in the EU is unsatisfactory. The largest percentage of people who did not participate in any form of education concerned people with lower than secondary education – about 80% of people aged 25-64 who graduated from secondary or vocational school – did not continue their education. This

group accounts for almost 60% of all people who do not participate in educational activities¹¹². The percentage decreases as the level of education increases.

Moreover, the highest percentage of those who did not participate in any form of education concerned the economically inactive (84%) and the unemployed (73%), although in theory these people had the most free time that could be devoted to their own education (except for the economically inactive people who look after others).

In view of these data, the European Commission has proposed a Renewed European Agenda in the field of Adult Learning, defining the directions of adult education policy¹¹³. In the documents, the European Commission recognises the need for all adults to regularly improve their personal and professional qualifications and skills, and lists the following among the necessary actions:

- increasing access for all adults to flexible and high-quality education at any time in their lives,
- developing new methods of adult education, focusing on learning outcomes,
- raising awareness that lifelong learning is an important element of learning,
- developing effective lifelong learning guidance systems and systems for validating non-formal and informal learning.



111 European Commission, Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/pl/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

112 Central Statistical Office, 2009, Adult Education https://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/WZ_ksztalcenie_doroslych.pdf

113 Council of Europe, Official Journal of the European Union, Council Resolution on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030 (2021/C 504/02) [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)&from=EN)

7. COMPETENCES MAP

Educator of disadvantaged adults

Nowadays, adult education teachers and trainers face very different profiles of low-qualified people from different backgrounds, including vulnerable, marginalised groups who are at risk of exclusion. Adult education teachers and trainers need to develop their personal and social skills to understand the very different realities of their students.

Empathy, active listening, and other special skills are essential when working with students with special educational needs, social, emotional and mental health needs as well as physical needs, students who are at a socio-economic disadvantage, women who experienced domestic violence, people with reading difficulties, seniors and students from different cultural backgrounds such as refugees, migrants, etc.

The tasks of an educator of disadvantaged adults are to:

- increase their own knowledge of the realities of different types of disadvantaged students,
- build empathy, trust and improving their active listening skills,
- break down barriers and stereotypes about students from disadvantaged backgrounds,
- identify the needs of sensitive students,
- form methodology for active learning for disadvantaged students.

The project identifies the areas of competences and their development, which should be paid attention to by adult educators:

- Consider the different situations that lead to marginalisation, social exclusion and poverty,

- learn how to design activities that support the growth of diversity in modern society,
- get inspired how to create a humanistic, anti-discriminatory and stimulating learning atmosphere,
- share best practices for dealing with difficult situations with disadvantaged students.

To be a good teacher, you should be an effective communicator and a critical thinker. You should also show patience, organisation and creativity. The schools you apply to will want to see these characteristics together with a genuine desire to improve students' lives in a lasting and meaningful way. Helping others succeed is central to learning, and trust, knowledge and commitment are the basics to achieve this.

Key competences of a trainer

Communication

The best teachers are those who communicate frequently and effectively with their students, so teachers must have excellent communication skills. These include both verbal and written communication, professional but friendly body language and the ability to listen actively. You need to be able to explain the material to students in a way that is accessible and understandable.

You need to be able to adapt your communication style to the needs of different learners depending on their age, culture, skills and learning style. Transparency, accuracy and professionalism are essential skills in dealing with parents and colleagues.

The most important communication skills of teachers are:

- supporting others,
- awareness of body language,
- building a community,
- building relationships,
- communicating with parents and the wider community,
- cooperation with students, colleagues and administrators,
- creating and maintaining interpersonal relationships,
- knowing and adapting to recipients,
- leadership,
- listening,
- setting boundaries,
- speaking clearly and avoiding jargon,
- writing reports, instructions and correspondence.

Critical thinking

Teachers are tasked with solving various problems, often within tight deadlines. They answer difficult questions from students on the spot, solve conflicts between students, verify lesson plans and deal with problems in friendship groups.

Being a teacher requires the ability to synthesise information that you have available at any time and to make sound decisions quickly, relying on critical thinking skills. Successful teachers think critically by:

- Adapting to the changing needs of students.
- Asking difficult questions and answering "what-if" questions.
- Gathering information.
- Creating and maintaining a comfortable learning environment.

- Defining the style of their class.
- Developing and delivering lessons relevant to the audience.
- Managing student behaviour.
- Observing students and colleagues and anticipate their needs.
- Actively problem solving.
- Setting expectations and goals.
- Problem solving and creating solutions.
- Providing adequate support for students.
- Synthesising data.

Organisation

As a teacher, you will have to juggle many tasks, from teaching in the classroom to attending meetings, and from lesson planning to marking. To manage all of these things effectively, you need to be both mentally and physically organised. Organisational skills of teachers include:

- Adherence to strict schedules and deadlines.
- Participating and conducting meetings with students, parents, colleagues and administrators.
- Creating tasks and exams.
- Record keeping.
- Time management in and out of the classroom.
- Planning and preparing lessons.
- Prioritisation.
- Planning.
- Anticipating problems and being able to get help.
- Preparing the classroom and creating methods for maintaining its order.

Creativity

To keep participants engaged, enthusiasm is essential in teaching every age group. Being creative when planning and presenting activities is an integral part of keeping participants' attention. You should be flexible, keep a sense of humour, and understand that what works for one participant may not necessarily work for others. Building creativity as a teacher also means:

- accepting ambiguity.
- building self-confidence.
- Not being afraid of failure.
- Being open to trying out new things.

In addition, a teacher should be:

- Enthusiastic
- True to themselves
- Passionate about education

Patience

Teachers need to be patient, especially in difficult situations in the classroom. They often have to explain concepts multiple times and manage students / participants who are acting out or having difficulties.

The teacher has to deal with all of this with a calm, professional attitude

and pay close attention to the challenge of the moment. While some people are inherently more patient than others, the emotional control and maturity that goes into patience can be learned and should be practiced. To attain patience as a skill, teachers should adopt some of the following:

- be a positive role model,
- be respectful,
- be supportive,
- be a team player,
- be understanding,
- have a positive attitude,
- have compassion and empathy.

Technical skills

Teachers need to understand the material they teach. Of course, different positions require different types and levels of skills, but even teachers of very young children need considerable expertise. It is not enough to be a maths teacher for example,

In year one and just do basic arithmetic functions. The teacher must have a deep understanding of numbers and numerical relationships to be able to explain the material in an accurate and responsive way.

Teachers need to be able to perform basic technical tasks related to their role, from using Microsoft Office comfortably to creating content, all the way to troubleshooting when the smart board stops working.

Technical skills of teachers include good general computer skills and the ability to understand and use:

- Classroom management software and systems.
- Database.
- Electronic presentations.
- Creation and management of spreadsheets.
- Virtual meetings.
- Electronic performance evaluations.
- Microsoft Office software.
- Internet

Other soft skills include:

- Assertiveness
- Emotional intelligence
- Attention to detail
- Compassion
- Encouragement
- Mindfulness
- Neutrality
- Discretion

Competences Map

We believe that there are three types of competences for educators working with disadvantaged adults.

Specialised competences

- knowledge of the subject
- ability to create links between theory and practice
- ability to supplement the content with reference to new emerging solutions in a given field and related fields

Psychopedagogical competences

- ability to get to know learners, taking into account their age and individual characteristics when designing and implementing development services
- ability to easily communicate with learners, influence and motivate them to learn
- ability to design and carry out optimal educational activities (setting learning goals, select content, develop development strategies,

create an appropriate learning environment, establish appropriate forms, methods and assessment tools, etc.)

- ability to prepare learners for self-education

Social and managerial competences

- ability to organise the learner's work in relation to teaching tasks and to establish responsibilities in the group
- ability to establish cooperation, an appropriate climate in the group and conflict resolution
- ability to take responsibility
- ability to lead, organise, coordinate, guide, motivate and make decisions depending on the situation

These three types of competences should be considered in the following elements of the educational process:

1. Balance of competences
2. Designing a development service
3. Carrying out a development service
4. Validation
5. Motivation and advice

It is also necessary to define the basic competences that any educator working with disadvantaged adults should have, no matter which part of the educational process they deal with.



BASIC COMPETENCES

In terms of knowledge an educator:

- is aware of their prejudices and attitudes and how this affects their relationships with disadvantaged adults
- understands the different values shared by adults and their families
- believes in the ability to educate every adult
- understands the factors that create exclusion in society, lead to marginalisation and poverty
- understands the social and cultural dimension of education and learning
- can list the characteristics and skills that an educator of disadvantaged adults should have (including assertiveness, emotional intelligence, attention to detail, compassion, mindfulness, neutrality, discretion)

In terms of skills an educator:

- presents a personalised and individualised attitude towards disadvantaged adults
- looks at the learner comprehensively, caring for their social and emotional development
- establishes an interpersonal bond with the learner and their family
- recognises and respects cultural and individual differences
- encourages intercultural respect and understanding among adults
- treats all adults with respect and reaffirms their worth and dignity
- constantly improves their own competences and qualifications

BALANCE OF COMPETENCES AND IDENTIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

In terms of knowledge, an educator:

- understands and can explain the need for lifelong learning
- defines the basic concepts of:
 - assessment of knowledge, skills and social competences (including the balance of competences and analysis of educational needs)
 - a development plan for disadvantaged adults (hereinafter: diagnosis)
- knows the rules of creating research tools used in diagnosis (e.g., creating a questionnaire, interview scenario)
- knows the tools and methods of diagnosis
- presents risk factors occurring in the diagnosis process together with suggestions for counteracting them.

In terms of skills, an educator:

- selects the analysis tools tailored to the individual abilities and limitations of a given person
- refers to their own experiences and takes into account the characteristics of a given person, discusses the advantages and disadvantages of tools and methods useful in diagnosis
- takes into account the individual's experience in defining their developmental needs
- identifies problems that may arise during the diagnosis and solves them creatively
- proposes various types of development services, matching them to the individual needs and possibilities of a given person and previous experience with education in order to create an individual development path
- prepares a diagnosis report, taking into account such elements as: objectives, methods, tools, participants, results, conclusions, limitations and possibilities
- presents the diagnosis report in a way that is understandable to an adult in a disadvantaged situation, together with the rationale for selected development services

DESIGNING A DEVELOPMENT SERVICE TAILORED TO THE NEEDS AND CAPABILITIES OF A DISADVANTAGED ADULT

In terms of knowledge, an educator:

- defines the target group, indicating the factors that motivate it and the barriers that limit its participation in the lifelong learning process
- defines and compares development services, including the advan-

tages and disadvantages of methods and techniques for conducting development services, including information and computer technologies

- knows the techniques that activate the group, including ice breakers, team building exercises, role playing, drama techniques, work in pairs and groups
- lists techniques, methods and tools for mutual learning of adults based on combining educational activation with activity in other areas aimed at improving their personal or family situation.
- presents the principles of developing materials supporting learning and using teaching aids
- explains the principles of cooperation with other educators as part of creating a development service

In terms of skills, an educator:

- collects and summarises information and data and critically evaluates it
- defines the goals of the development service
- proposes indicators for the set goals which allow to determine the level of their implementation
- defines learning outcomes and methods of their verification
- takes into account the way adults learn when designing a development service (including a practical approach, focusing on problem-solving, close connection with the situation and context of the learner)
- divides the service into smaller modules tailored to the needs of the target group
- includes elements in the service that will make it enjoyable for example games and multimedia solutions
- prepares documentation of the development service (including an outline), taking into account the goals and necessary resources

- justifies the selection of goals, content, methods, tools and forms of development for a given service
- discusses the risks involved in the implementation of the planned development service and proposes alternative scenarios

CARRYING OUT A DEVELOPMENT SERVICE TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF A DISADVANTAGED ADULT

In terms of knowledge, an educator:

- defines the learning styles of adults
- presents Kolb's cycle and explains the principles of transferring knowledge to adults
- understands that in contact with adults, they are both an educator and a learner
- knows and compares techniques that activate the group and lists verbal and non-verbal forms of communication
- has an awareness and knows the importance of body language
- justifies the sequence of stages of a development service, taking into account the learning process, the needs of recipients and the objectives of the service
- presents the principles of providing instructions for exercises
- understands the importance of trust and respect in the group and knows the tools that can be used to achieve it
- understands the importance of the local community in developing the skills of disadvantaged adults
- gives examples of possible difficult situations that can occur during the conduct of development services and suggests ways of solving them
- explains how to care for the atmosphere in the group

- discusses the impact of mistakes made by educators while conducting classes on the achievement of the assumed goals of the development service

In terms of skills, an educator:

- sets priorities
- determines the time needed to implement individual thematic blocks / modules
- manages class time and adheres to the assigned schedule
- anticipates possible difficulties and plans appropriate actions
- prepares a place where the development service is carried out in accordance with the needs of the program and people participating in the service
- welcomes the participants of the service, presents its assumptions and organisational matters
- gives instructions for exercises, games and other activities in a way that is understandable to participants
- uses a variety of teaching methods and techniques adequate to the objectives during classes
- uses different and adequate teaching aids
- analyses the behaviour of participants and reacts appropriately to the situation in order to achieve the objectives of the lesson
- builds an atmosphere of trust and engages the attention and supports the participants' motivation
- encourages the exchange of experiences between participants
- ensures the effectiveness of communication through the use of various communication techniques and tools
- gives constructive feedback to participants
- in the event of a difficult situation in the group, reacts in a way that enables further achievement of the objectives of the service

- summarises the classes
- speaks clearly and loudly, avoids jargon
- exchanges good practices on how to deal with difficult situations arising during the learning process
- collaborates with learners, educators and development service organisers
- prepares an evaluation of a development service, also including a proposal for further actions, improvements or modifications

VALIDATION OF THE ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE DURING THE DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

In terms of knowledge, an educator:

- lists the techniques and tools for validating learning outcomes
- understands the importance of techniques other than tests and exams for disadvantaged adults
- discusses the importance of the micro-credential tool in the successful learning process of disadvantaged adults

In terms of skills, an educator:

- carries validation against the criteria specified at the start of the service
- provides feedback to participants, pointing to the acquired competences and how they can be used, and indicates further areas for development
- proposes additional activities to strengthen the educational and development effects of the service provided
- prepares a report on the performed validation in relation to the assumed goals of the service

MOTIVATION AND ADVICE

In terms of knowledge, an educator:

- lists the methods that are used and promotes the link between education and practice
- knows a variety of solutions to help actively reach out to disadvantaged adults
- understands the importance of the local community in the learning process of disadvantaged adults
- discusses the techniques of giving advice and guidance counselling
- they know the methods of motivating adults to participate in the learning process.

In terms of skills, an educator:

- offers advice and support to disadvantaged adults in learning and validating acquired skills
- uses entrepreneurs and the importance of skills for professional development in the process of motivating adults to lifelong learning
- actively reaches out to adults in places where they regularly visit, including their workplace
- identifies stakeholders who are in constant contact with disadvantaged adults
- conducts guidance and career counselling and gives advice to disadvantaged adults



GLOSSARY

Competence – the broadly understood ability to undertake specific activities and perform tasks with the use of learning outcomes and own experiences that have been validated.

Skills – the ability to properly and efficiently perform a specific type of activity, task or function. By “proper performance” it is meant, the use of appropriate theoretical and practical knowledge and compliance with social norms, in particular relating to a given type of activity.

Social skills – the ability to shape one’s own development, an autonomous and responsible participation in professional and social life, developed in the course of learning, taking into account the ethical context of one’s own conduct.

Development services – activity aimed at acquiring, maintaining or increasing knowledge, skills or social competences.

Validation – The skills validation process allows individuals to identify, document, evaluate and certify their skills.

Social exclusion – a situation in which a given individual, who is a member of society, cannot normally participate in the activities of its citizens, and this limitation does not result from internal beliefs, but is beyond the control of the excluded individual. Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon and in practice it means the inability to participate in economic, political and cultural life as a result of the lack of access to resources, goods, institutions and the limitation of

social rights and deprivation of needs.

Own glossary development based on:

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