



European
Commission



EPALE

Community

Storybook

Empowering adults to learn
and participate in society

Acknowledgments

The present Storybook is the result of contributions of 100 members of the EPALE community. The 2021 Edition of the *EPALE Community Storybook* was developed as part of the [Community Stories initiative](#). EPALE is grateful to the many people who were involved in the process and enriched the platform with their experiences and passion.

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EPALE Community *Storybook*

Empowering adults to learn and participate in society

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PREFACE

Roberto Carlini,

director of EACEA

The European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) manages the contracts of the EPALE Central Support Services and National Support Services, under the supervision of a Steering Committee that it chairs and which includes representatives of the Agency and the Directorates Generals for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, as well as Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.



It is a pleasure for me to present to you this inspiring book, collecting stories from the EPALE Community.

This edition of the community stories covers the EPALE thematic focuses of 2021: life and work skills, digital transition and inclusive social change. The beauty of this storybook is that adult learning practitioners, hence persons at the grassroots level, have the chance to disseminate their perspectives and experiences, get comments and inspire their peers. You have the opportunity to read 100 contributions full of exciting thoughts, written with great passion and dedication.

The endeavours to shape a fairer society, implying more inclusion and openness to vulnerabilities and differences are remarkable. Many activities happen in informal and non-formal settings, several stories use cultural activities as an enabler for social inclusion and transfer of skills to participants. Language learning of migrants proves again to be the driver for democratic participation, together with the provision of basic skills. Active aging and inclusion of older citizens in lifelong learning as well as volunteering are also recurrent features, whether it is about digital inclusion, cultural heritage or intergenerational learning.

Mobility of adult learners with fewer opportunities – in particular low skilled – belongs to the novelties of the new Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027) in the adult education sector. Therefore, we are exploring how the Central and National Support Services, Ambassadors to ordinary EPALE members, could help National Agencies to reach out to organisations dealing with this target group.

All these efforts contribute to coming one step closer towards the EU target set within the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and endorsed by Member States. Accordingly, at least 60% of all adults should be participating in learning every year by 2030. This is also reflected in the European Skills Agenda – the five-year plan for further developing the skills area and the Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030.

The stories of this book confirm that EPALE is a valuable tool to bring adult educators, trainers and staff in the spotlight. I would like to thank all who contributed to this book. I wish them all success and I am convinced that they will inspire EPALE members to contribute with their own story in future.

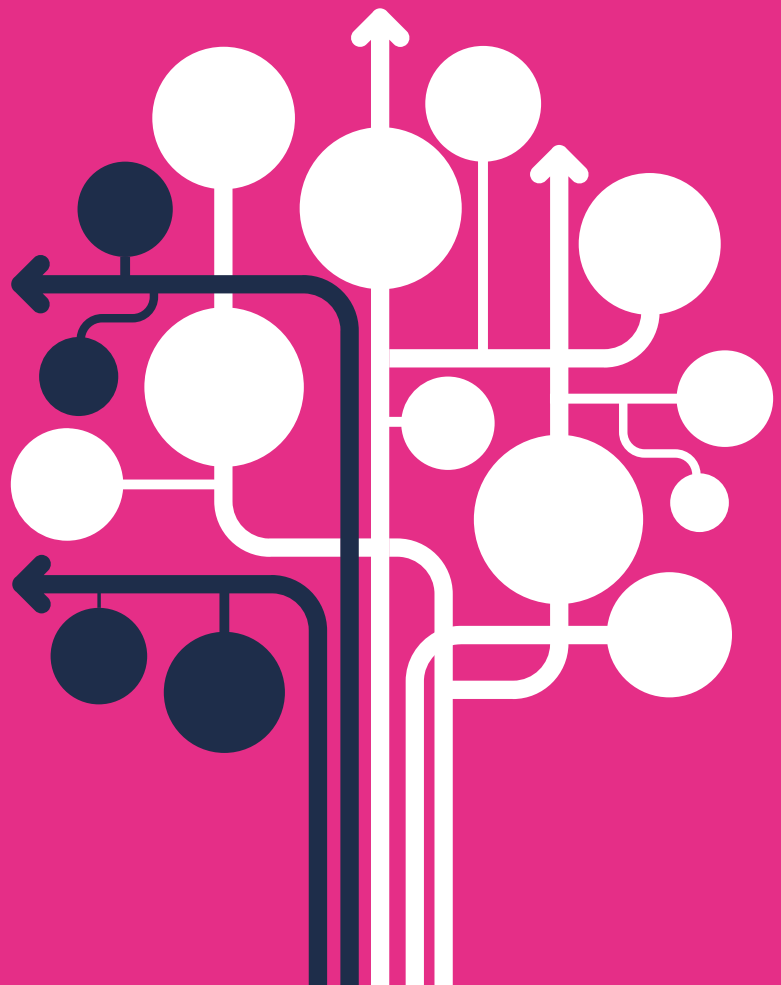
*Roberto Carlini,
director of EACEA*

Mapping the stories



1.

*Inclusive Social
Change* for
Sustainability and
Fairness





Stefan Perceval

Stefan is an actor, theatre director and has been the coordinator of theatre company HETGEVOLG in Turnhout for seven years. Besides the traditional performances, HETGEVOLG has been making Heart Projects with special target groups: non-native newcomers, young refugees, people in poverty... Stefan has been an actor for 26 years, and he has been doing this kind of work - working with people - for 16 years.

The theatre company HETGEVOLG has a big heart for people who fall outside the regular social circuit: newcomers who speak a different language, young refugees, people in poverty... We set up projects with them and give "the Other" a face with a story.

A story that everyone can identify with. So that "the Other" is brought closer. The power of theatre also ensures that they rediscover the strength within themselves and find the courage to join in with everyday life. Working together means getting to know one another, bringing out each other's strengths and, en passant, sharpening social and language skills. In addition to a theatre trajectory, a practical trajectory has been running for a year now.

The province of Antwerp gave us the opportunity to start up a project with the aim of offering people from vulnerable groups a learning workplace. The

"Working together means getting to know one another, bringing out each other's strengths and, en passant, sharpening social and language skills."

order to be able to participate in a job. People come to us through employment agencies, refugee agencies, social welfare centres... They can opt for theatre, for the practical route or for both. What skills do they need to participate? Being curious: about the other person, the theatre and about themselves. Our house is a ministry of dreams. One of my first questions is "Tell me your dream". Here they can, and are allowed to, work on a dream.

There is no plan or script in advance. We look at each person's background and we start from there. Each course is therefore a personalized course. And that

works in practice. Not everyone in the arts sector is ready for this and they want to shift our work to welfare. But I like being the odd one out. Our support is professional. The place and the environment in which we work are also professional. Our office is like Camp Nou. That's important - it shows respect. There is also a goal, we make a performance, so it is serious.

The power of art is that they get to work with their own story, like Beyoncé, Picasso, Nick Cave... That's how we make people think, "Damn, I'm worth something!". Neither the social worker nor the director will solve their problems. They have to find that solution themselves: how a scene unfolds, how they express themselves in their dialogue, in the confrontations of every day. We try to get rid of that, look for solutions, do it ourselves. This does not work for everyone, it is not always a success story. Some people want to be left alone and won't take matters into their own hands. Or they don't have a click with theatre. They have great stories, but they want to, and are allowed to, keep them for themselves.

HETGEVOLG is not doing this to polish its image. I've been working like this for 16 years. We haven't been idle for a day during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have worked individually, we are on the streets, in squares. That's necessary, we have to act. Poverty is

rising and through art we can connect with it. Art can be a connecting factor.

"Our house is a ministry of dreams."

province calls this an "inclusive economy", we call it "With heart and hand". Because what the heart does not feel, the hand cannot do. Parallel to our theatre projects, a workshop is organised in which these people can make sets (and become proficient in welding, woodwork, technical drawing, painting...) and master the tricks of light and sound technique (knowledge of materials, acoustics, electrical engineering, etc.). During this process, they learn the necessary attitudes which a person must have in



BELGIUM



Letizia Rompelberg

Letizia is the artistic director of the company Zout. She develops theatre projects to give a platform to social themes, in cooperation with the target group involved in the issue. Letizia has a passion for the “genuine” on stage and she prefers working with those with real experience. She thinks that by involving the relevant target group, we can also make a difference for these people.

Theatre is the ultimate medium through which to tell stories in a layered, emotional way. It touches people and offers a different perspective. I want to give people in a vulnerable position the opportunity to tell their story, to give them a platform. These include, for example, older people, people from the LGBT+ community, people living on the poverty line or people who are homeless. By letting them tell their own story in an artistic way, we can let a broad audience see and feel how thin the dividing line can be between being part of society or not.

Our most recent performance is *Ik Ben Hier*. This performance focuses on the stories of refugees. We met these people through a collaboration with Taalhuis Breda and de Nieuwe Veste in Breda. Through the performance, participants can show the Dutch audience how they struggle with integration, finding their bearings in this new society, and the obstacles they encounter. This performance gives them a chance to tell their story. They are listened to, which is often not the case. Participants follow a theatre training course that focuses on various aspects of theatre.

“This performance gives them a chance to tell their story. They are listened to, which is often not the case.”

Among other things, attention is paid to stage presentation and storytelling. These are also great ways

for them to work on their Dutch language skills. The participants are all very enthusiastic, which is lovely to see. People who tell a story based on their own experience are authentic. For Zout's projects, we always seek broad cooperation with relevant partners who are close to the target group. This is absolutely fundamental. It is important to involve a partner who

“By letting them tell their own story in an artistic way, we can let a broad audience see and feel how thin the dividing line can be between being part of society or not.”

is already familiar with the target group and from which the target group also has something to gain. Refugees and immigrants realise that they need the language to build a future. In the cooperation with partners, both parties have something to gain and something to contribute, we need one another.

I strive to make an impact with the performances, on multiple levels. Impact on those people with first-hand experience, on the audience that comes to see our performances, but also on a municipal level. I hope that with our performances, I can contribute to creating empathy and giving nuance to discussions of social issues. While discussing issues can also be of value, it's impossible to ignore personal stories told by people with first-hand experience. That is the beauty of our approach. It has genuine impact.



NETHERLANDS



Greet Vissers

Greet is a theatre maker and has been making children's and youth theater for years. She worked with various companies in Flanders and for a few years in Germany. Around 2005, youth theatre was booming and was taken seriously by many makers. For her, it was time for something new. At that time, the opportunity to make theater with newcomers in Flanders crossed her path. She started with workshops for refugees, and now makes truly professional performances and also offers theatre training for non-native speakers.



BELGIUM

KunstZ was founded in 2007. In 2010 it officially became a non-profit organisation and we received our first project subsidies. In 2014 we were recognised by the Flemish government as an arts organisation. We started with a workshop for newcomers but soon expanded into making theatre productions. Playing for an audience, giving visibility to the talent of non-native newcomers was an important objective. We put on our first performance with 11 players from all over the world, 4 musicians and an African percussion ensemble.

Following that, the major idea grew to work on more diversity in the performing arts. That idea was supported by 10 larger art organisations who also provided financial support. We continued to put on performances. But we needed more in order to work on the transition in the theater world. That led to our theater workspace, where we developed a part-time training programme. We trained people to be able to work in the Flemish theatre context.

plans. So, we also work with the participants on their qualities as 'makers' and their professional opportunities. As a result, people who are more advanced in their development as an artist now also come knocking on our door and we can work at a higher level on these projects. For those collaborations an open attitude is very important. We take the plans of everyone who comes along seriously. A long time ago I too was only able to start in theater because someone took

“There is a need for different actor profiles in theater and film. And there is also demand. So why shouldn't there be specific training if there is a need?”

me seriously. It's art education, and it's professional. The participants should be able to carry out this profession. There is a need for different actor profiles in theater and film. And there is also demand. So why shouldn't there be specific training if there is a need?

Even though a number of artists have professional experience in their home countries, it is important to redefine their signature as artists in Europe. For people who did not grow up in Western culture, it is an adjustment to get involved in the approach of a theatre or cultural production. Understanding how our social intercourse works and knowing the implicit rules in the artistic world is very important.

The artistic world needs to be aware of that too. They have not been taught about arts or even artistic entrepreneurship. They don't know what their talents

are. We see them grow enormously here. The idea that you may also be able to earn something in the cultural sector is also strange to them. They don't always receive appreciation at home or in their home country. So, they are very happy if they get money from us for some of their performances and can say, "Look, I made money from it."

We were open to people from very different backgrounds. Great numbers enrolled on the training course. This created two tracks within kunstZ: the *kunstZ-academy* and the productions. There was a lot of overlap and fluidity between the two. Meanwhile, a third track has also emerging: supporting and coaching people in their own theatre, film or acting



Shalan Alhamwy

Shalan has been the coordinator of the music workshop for one and a half years and studied both classical and Arabic music in Syria. He teaches the Western and Oriental violin and play in numerous ensembles such as *Olla Vogala*, *Liqā'* and *Damast Duo* and lead various music groups such as *Jiraan* and *Picea Orientalis*. Shalan also composes and performs his compositions worldwide, and has worked on stage with some of the best Arab artists such as Fairouz, Marcel Khalifa, and Rima Khsaish.



BELGIUM

If you want to learn *qanun*, *bağlama (saz)*, *ud*, *darbuka*, *riqq*, *bendir*, folk or Oriental violin you're in the right place at the *World Music Workshop* of Intercultural Centre De Centrale in Ghent. This music school takes place in a unique setting. It is one of the few places in Flanders that offers courses in world music. The way in which the pedagogical process is approached also makes this music school different from others. The music workshop offers an alternative to music education for adults, through its instruments and approach.

We are not an official academy or part of part-time art education. The instruments mainly originate from countries around the Mediterranean. But we also offer folk violin classes. In addition to the instrument lessons, there is also ensemble playing and we give workshops and masterclasses, e.g. Moroccan singing, Bulgarian singing, Black Sea accordion. Here we take it a little bit further than in our regular classes. Traditional music often has an oral tradition. It is handed down through the generations from musician to musician, from master to pupil. That is why we are looking for a different pedagogical approach than in classical music or jazz.

Learning melodies by ear is therefore an important aspect in this music, as are other aspects related to certain musical styles such as embellishments,

improvisations and modulation. Without those embellishments, the music becomes too simple. With scores you can learn a melody, but to learn ornamentation you have to listen to an experienced musician. This can be live or through a recording. An ideal and progressive pedagogical method should apply a good understanding of both methods, namely playing from a score and playing by ear.

“Learning melodies by ear is therefore an important aspect in this music, as are other aspects related to certain musical styles such as embellishments, improvisations and modulation.”

De Centrale engages teachers who, as musicians, have their feet firmly rooted in live music practice. Their approach is more focused on performance and on the pleasure of playing than on theoretical music study. Nevertheless, our teachers are sufficiently trained to teach the students the required music theory. They combine different teaching methods so that the students can further improve their skills in the study of their instrument. I have followed classical music education myself and noticed that there are 2 different worlds. I am a different person when I play classical music. I learned Bach to play from a score, while Bach himself improvised.

The cadenzas of Mozart were also improvisations and the scores were written out later. And now, in most cases, we are not allowed to improvise in classical music anymore. In traditional Eastern music I can.





HUNGARY

Tünde Nemes-Nagy

Tünde is the president of the Association of the Blind and Partially-Sighted in Nyíregyháza where she also works as a social worker, advocacy leader, and tender writer. She has been visually impaired since birth, and she has acquired the basics of independent learning in a primary school for blind children. Tünde enrolled in the Community Coordination Programme at the University of Nyíregyháza in 2017.

University education has not been all plain sailing. Although I still have my laptop with me in class, the lecturers were not prepared for teaching the vis-

ually impaired. The university did not enforce the relevant regulations. Fortunately, there were still a few lecturers at the university who offer to help me and let me shape their educational approach. I have also been able to team up with two students who offered me personal assistance in studying. With one of my personal attendants we work together at the Association of the Blind and Partially-Sighted in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. She helps me with administrative and technical tasks. She also accompanies me to exams. This is especially helpful when I need to go to a classroom that I would not find on my own. Sometimes we even study together. Another personal attendant

helps me get to my lecturers' consulting hours.

During our meetings, we go through the assistive technology tools I have with me in class, the format of the course materials that I will be able to use and the course completion requirements. In the extraordinary times caused by the pandemic, digital education has been introduced in higher education.

"I have also been able to team up with two students who offered me personal assistance in studying."

I am fully aware that visually impaired people are rarely taken into consideration when making and designing digital tools. I was fearful when digital education was introduced since we were not given lectures at university on how to use technology for learning purposes. Nevertheless, my digital competences have definitely improved.

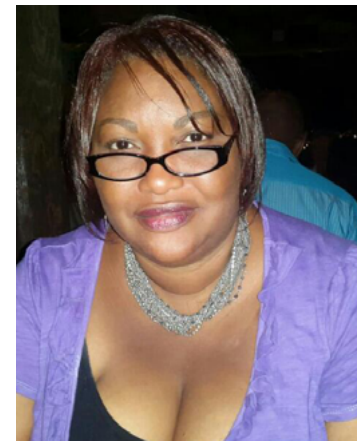
Lisandra Martis

Lisandra was born and raised in Curaçao, in the Dutch Caribbean. She is 52 years old and owns a company called Mazeli Consultants, whose main services include tax services, human resource services and management services, among others. She is a member of Amnesty International Curaçao, Toastmaster's International, and President of a Federation that takes care of the needs of 5000+ inhabitants in 8+ neighbourhoods.

Otrobanda is ONE of the areas of downtown Curaçao, that houses inhabitants of many different economic and social statuses. The foundation Federation Otrobanda is the point of reference between social /civic organisations of inhabitants in the neighbourhoods of Otrobanda and Government and NGOs. We record the needs of the inhabitants in the areas of social development, infrastructures, safety, hygiene. Together with the government and NGO entities we plan the solutions and programs needed to accomplish this. This exposure to people's needs sparked the need to create new programs or solutions. This is what inspired A.R.T.E. The target groups for upgrades and courses are adults with specific skills or a specific product that can be used to generate income

for the person. A.R.T.E. helps people to make the most of their skills to generate income for themselves. Arte in papiamentu means art. Most of the time the financially challenged person with a specific talent or skill does not recognise the potential of their skill or product. People tend to think that if you do not have a formal education with regards to your talent, skill or product, it is not of high value. Most of their art is the product of natural talent or self-taught skills, inherited skills or talent passed down from generation to generation. Our goal is to teach, compliment, upgrade or re-introduce the art and any other skills necessary to help the individual participate in the circular economy. All art has value. After realising its value, the person is then ready to start to learn the rest of the skills needed to turn their art, into an economic asset.

"Most of the time the financially challenged person with a specific talent or skill does not recognise the potential of their skill or product."



NETHERLANDS

Jumbo Klercq

Since 2000 Jumbo has been involved in various European projects on adult education. He has carried out a lot of projects related to learning in later life, intergenerational and intercultural learning, entrepreneurship and social participation. Jumbo started out as a trainer at a Dutch residential folk high school, then as a project developer and senior advisor at various semi-commercial training centres. In 2008 he set up his own agency, The Elephant Learning in Diversity.



NETHERLANDS

The participant population in adult education is becoming increasingly diverse. Many educational institutions strive for an inclusive learning environment in which every student can develop in the best way possible, irrespective of gender, personality, learning style, physical handicap, cultural background or philosophy of life. However, this is often little more than a well-intentioned affirmation in a mission statement, as opposed to something embedded in the organisational structure and culture. We say we support diversity, but all too easily we forget to discuss what diversity actually means. This is why attention to diversity must be put back on the agenda. This is a conclusion shared by one of the most successful Erasmus+ projects I have been involved in recently: the *DiversityCapacities (DivCap)* project. The aim of this project is to support and promote inclusion and diversity in adult education.

“We say we support diversity, but all too easily we forget to discuss what diversity actually means.”

This is achieved by providing concrete instruments and measures that have been tested in educational institutions and organisations. Based on case studies and pilot projects, we developed recommendations and lessons learned. The work was mainly aimed at the organisational level, where the emphasis was on implementing concrete measures to promote integration and diversity at the institutional level. In each country, the partner organisations worked together with one or two other organisations willing to take a step forward in the implementation of diversity orientation. Diversity should not be the subject, but rather the starting point, of education. The aim is to put dealing with diversity at the centre of the educational process and the learning context. It ensures that participants, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or origin, feel welcome and visible.



POLAND

Beata Nessel-Łukasik

Beata is a PhD sociologist, art historian, curator. Scholar from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. First involved with the National Museum in Warsaw and then with the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów. She is the creator of the first Department of Local Programs in Poland and co-author of a new concept of the museum. Currently, Beata is an assistant professor at the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw and a member of the *Muzealnictwo* editors.

For the last ten years, as a sociologist and researcher, I have had the opportunity to co-create the process of building a relationship between

the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów and its surroundings. The basis for starting this cooperation was to see the lack of presence which the local community has in the creation of the museum. Why do the museum's neighbours not come through our doors? Is the reason solely that like with many other institutions, museums are seen by the local community primarily as a tourist attraction or educational institution for children and young people? Without ready answers to such questions, we decided in the following years to deepen our knowledge in an effort to combine the social research of sociologists

“Why do the museum's neighbours not come through our doors?”

with the practice of cultural animators. As a result, we tried to involve various people in the process of involving residents in activities based on the idea of social participation. We analysed the needs and expectations of the local community towards the new institution, and we were able not only to carry out the current activities more freely and confidently, but also to design a museum space for our neighbours. In the whole process of building relations between the museum and its surroundings and between the institution and the inhabitants and residents of Sulejów, we also engaged artists and cultural animators specialising in participatory projects and activities in public spaces. In this way, we tried with each subsequent joint action not only to get to know the environment better, but also to arouse curiosity and interest among our neighbours and neighbours for joint actions.

Georgia Nicolaou

Georgia is an EU project manager at the Center for Social Innovation, Cyprus. She has a BA degree in Primary Education from the University of Cyprus and an MSc in Museum Education from the University of Glasgow. Georgia is also working as a museum education freelancer aiming to develop meaningful and engaging museum and cultural heritage experiences for various audiences online or in real life.

As part of my role as a project manager at CSI Cyprus I am currently managing *MHM – Mental Health Matters through Restorative Art*. An Erasmus+ project which brings together a cross-sector, strategic partnership of 6 organisations to support innovation in the field of adult education and to create innovative tools that enhance the healthcare provision and self-representation of those who live within mental health structures in the participating countries (the UK, Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Hungary) and across Europe.

“Mental health should be treated as everyone’s responsibility as it does not only affect the lives of people living with mental health disorders and their carers but society as a whole.”

This is based on a methodological approach which puts together the benefits of art therapy with the values of restorative justice. Mental health should be treated as everyone’s responsibility as it does not only affect the lives of people living with mental health disorders and their carers but society as a whole. People with mental health illnesses and particularly those living in mental health structures are at the leading edge of socially disadvantaged groups, suffering from stigmatisation and marginalisation as well as social injustices.

One of the ways to restore the balance in mental health settings and facilitate the re-integration of mental health users into the society is by using restorative art approaches in therapy. Restorative art serves as another language and has an inherent ability to help people of all ages explore emotions and beliefs, reduce stress, resolve problems and conflicts, and enhance their sense of well-being. Now more than ever there is an evident need for more contemporary approaches which will reduce the use of medicines and help to restore the balance in mental health structures.

MHM is all about translating restorative arts potential and benefits of combining therapeutic art with restorative justice into educational material and programmes aimed at mental health and restorative justice professionals as well as emerging and established artists. In order to develop the learning material for the two e-learning platforms, a transnational study was undertaken by the partners and featured in the form of an e-book acting as a Training Manual on the use of restorative art in mental health structures.

The study reflects on the use of art in mental health structures among the participating countries as well as on certain

ways in which art is being exploited in these structures. The training manual led to the development of the two interactive online learning courses which are the main service of the project and are provided through the [official website](#). Users can also find information about the results and work of the project, as well as the complete educational knowledge and skills delivery material. The educational material of the platform, as well as the other services of the project are provided in four languages (Greek, English, Spanish, Hungarian).

“Restorative art serves as another language and has an inherent ability to help people of all ages explore emotions and beliefs, reduce stress, resolve problems and conflicts, and enhance their sense of well-being.”



CYPRUS



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BELGIUM

Jo Daems

Jo is a lecturer at the Thomas More College University for the courses Occupational Therapy (OT) in the Context of School and Special Communication. Since 2005 she has been active as a qualitative researcher for projects aimed at the inclusion of people with (intellectual) disabilities.

Fifteen years ago an engineer researcher at our college, walked into the Ergo teacher's room asking whether we had any tips for making the internet accessible to people with intellectual dis-

abilities. I had no tips, but I was intrigued. Together with a colleague from the ICT department, I submitted a research proposal and I took my first steps in project-based scientific research. A few months later, 70 adults with intellectual disabilities sat down at the computer. Second-year occupational therapy students guided the participants through a customised computer test, learned to observe skills in vivo and experienced how to learn from collaboration with experienced experts. The first students helped us identify barriers to using the internet and participated in a number of workshops. People with intellectual disabilities liked coming to the campus, they were eager to learn, to study "as well", "just like...".

"Lifelong learning is important, it contributes to a strong sense of self-esteem and creates opportunities in the labour market."

This is how the idea grew to focus not only on research, but also on training. Together with the training organisations Pasform and Konekt, we developed the Inclusive Secondary Education (ISE) course. Initially, the course was exclusively for adults with intellectual disabilities on the higher education campus, but later it was integrated with lessons from the occupational therapy courses. OT students and ISE students

attended lessons together on communication during an internship and together sought solutions to learning questions that they had following the internship. Lifelong learning is important, it contributes to a strong sense of self-esteem and creates opportunities in the labour market. This includes adults with (intellectual) disabilities.

Dzintra Līce

Dzintra always enjoys life! Three areas where she feels most confident are tourism and hospitality, psychology, and andragogy. She has worked in the national library and has gained international work experience in Egypt, Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, and elsewhere. For 25 years, Dzintra has been the head of social training, a teacher in professional guidance training institutions, and an adult trainer in businesses and training centers.

I have had excellent opportunities to combine my knowledge in psychology with work in the tourism and hospitality businesses. I am curious about new challenges, new opportunities, and it does not matter that I am 61 years old. The *ESF* project of the State Social Inclusion conference represents five years of work on the project. Although my primary education is in psychology, the first months in the project were a challenge - different diagnoses, characters, stories of life, and experiences. What did I discover? An hour for close contacts can only begin if I understand each student's mood and the current

"The tears quickly turned into conversations, stories; we found music and moved around, danced."

challenges that need to be resolved. Maybe they are still sleepy, so we start with some exercises. Perhaps they are sad, or something unpleasant has happened.

Sometimes the solution is right in front of you. ...and you can still have a *Tear Party*. What's that? The first one we organized when the crafts teacher left. The

students were so sad. They were afraid to show it because they knew it was not the done thing to cry. We decided that we could let ourselves grieve and mourn and grieve once again for all our losses. The tears quickly turned into conversations, stories; we found music and moved around, danced. I did my best to raise my students' self-confidence, self-respect, develop their skills to understand and drive their own emotions.

So they can use them in future, in close contact with oneself and others. We overcame our fears and climbed the towers. No obstacles can stop us if we are free and able to see opportunities!



LATVIA

Mark Vlak

Mark says that as someone in his late fifties he is already an oldie in this profession. As a social innovative entrepreneur, he is always interested in making learning efforts visible and measurable. Mark's first project in the Social Domain and Welfare was to create an initiative for labour guidance based on his research on poverty reduction. It is his personal mission to look for new pathways to inclusion and participation when working or learning is not in reach.

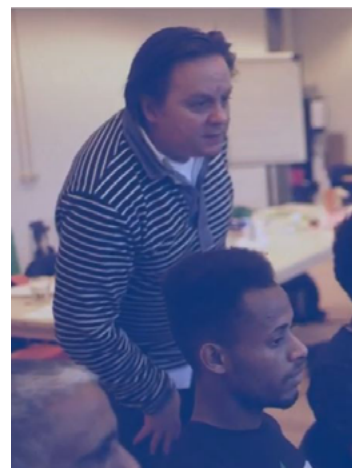
Our society today faces many more challenges than ever before. Life threatening virus diseases such as Coronavirus, climate change and wars generating a large flow of refugees, unbalances society. It requires new solutions and new skills to bring the current society back into balance. Our new social vocabulary with terms like well-being, purpose-economy and resilience create a new form of social well-being. Being able to participate meaningfully in an inclusive society means that everyone has to adapt. Newcomers must experience and master new customs, values and norms. Residents should renew their values and norms by learning new skills for the right path to work or learn in the fast changing new and meaningful economy. Lifelong Learning development and adapting new experiences will become the basis of skills for life and work, enabling us to learn and participate in our

“Being able to participate meaningfully in an inclusive society means that everyone has to adapt.”

changing society. New ways to connected or blended learning and experiences will help. Making this available to the wider target group can create an inclusive social change and justice for everyone. New ways of finding the right pathways

to education and work should be accessible to everyone. It should create more independence and resilience so that everyone can choose their desired path.

Learning happens everywhere, we often forget to register what we have learned, also what we learned at work. It will be necessary to connect non-formal and formal learning that creates the right values to be able to validate non-formal learning, which in turn is needed to get on the connecting bridge to a personal working and learning pathway. *Skills-Connect* connects these worlds by using the *Cities of Learning* platform and the digital structure of open badges.



NETHERLANDS



GREECE

Areti Bofiliou

Areti is an ICT teacher who has worked for seven years at the Second Chance School Xanthi-Kentavros, in a remote mountainous village in northern Greece. Her students are mostly women who have not finished mandatory education. They lack basic knowledge and life skills and face obstacles to fully participate in the labour market and society. It is a great challenge to empower them and provide them with learning opportunities while preserving their cultural diversity.

My story concerns the Erasmus+ KA1 *Digital dynamic cultural dialogue*. We organised an Erasmus+ seminar in Guadeloupe-France on the subject

of ICT tools for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Experiential activities and workshops were run on different fields of cultural heritage. Through these activities, the participating teachers had the opportunity to examine and analyse culture in today's globalised and ever-changing social environment. We have appreciated the value of cultural heritage and particularly intangible cultural heritage, which is relevant for communities which include minority groups. At the same time, we explored ways, tools and methods of preserving and continuing the cultural

heritage, through the educational process and in the context of modern schooling.

In a completely experiential and participatory learning environment, we familiarised ourselves with the culture of Guadeloupe, a place which is very different to our own. We participated in a workshop to learn the Creole language using storytelling and music. We also visited places where they prepared traditional food and experienced the natural environment with on-site visits. This is as a means of promoting diversity and multiculturalism in the current ever-changing conditions of globalisation, but also as a means of adapting to internationalised work and learning environments. The learning process

“The learning process must be experiential and participatory in order to be as effective as possible and to ensure its continuity.”

must be experiential and participatory in order to be as effective as possible and to ensure its continuity. This is becoming more and more important for teachers who work with vulnerable population groups.

Joanna Kinberger

Joanna works as EU project manager at equalizent Schulungs- und Beratungs GmbH in Vienna, Austria. *equalizent* is a company with many years of expertise in the fields of Deafness, Sign Language and Diversity Management, offering courses and counselling in German and Austrian Sign Language for people who are d/Deaf, Hard of Hearing and hearing.



AUSTRIA

Writing an Erasmus+ application is always challenging but designing an intervention to ensure access to bilingual (signed and written) information for d/Deaf jobseekers is doubly challenging – simply because there are so few resources available in Sign Language. Through the Erasmus+ project *Accessible Work for All*, our aim is to promote equality, non-discrimina-

tion and diversity through the innovation of providing information on working rights in accessible digital formats. In other words, our outputs, in the form of animated videos with Sign Language moderation, explain different aspects of working rights for workers and employees. At the beginning of each video, a character introduces a specific situation (i.e. employment contracts, conflict in the workplace, home office, and many more) and the rest of the video is an explanation of the relevant employment regulations.

employment for d/Deaf people is three times higher than world national averages according to the World Federation of the Deaf, making d/Deaf job seekers particularly vulnerable to the poverty trap. More than 90 per cent of d/Deaf children are born to hearing parents so they lack an adult language model at home.

“Unemployment for d/Deaf people is three times higher than world national averages according to the World Federation of the Deaf, making d/Deaf job seekers particularly vulnerable to the poverty trap.”

Across Europe, lack of bilingual schooling means that most d/Deaf children try to learn to read and write without reference to their first language (Sign Language). This leaves

them at a disadvantage to their hearing peers from a young age, the disparity growing as they get older.

By providing information on working rights in accessible or barrier-free digital formats – in Austrian, German, Italian and Polish Sign Languages – our intervention is in line with the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which is the first international treaty ever to recognise sign languages and the linguistic human rights of d/Deaf people.

The videos last between 5-8 minutes and they are subtitled. Accompanying plain language texts ensure the content is fully accessible and facilitate understanding of any complex terminology or jargon. Unem-

“Our aim is to enable greater self-study, self-determination and empowerment – the accessible format means that d/Deaf job seekers can access the information on working rights unaided, without communication assistance or interpretation.”

Our aim is to enable greater self-study, self-determination and empowerment – the accessible format means that d/Deaf job seekers can access the information on working rights unaided, without communication assistance or interpretation.

Moreover, the provision of online digital tools contributes towards reducing disparities in access to and engagement with digital technologies in non-formal education for d/Deaf job seekers.





LITHUANIA

Ieva Kaupaitė

Ieva works in the field of social work at the Youth Day Center, where the beneficiaries are people with intellectual disabilities. Her work involves improving the quality of life of these individuals by teaching them to make their own decisions and helping them to acquire new professional skills through work or project activities. She is currently coordinating the project *Solidarity Coffee* which enables people with intellectual disabilities to acquire work skills and enter the labour market by producing the most solidary and fragrant coffee, offering it to all passers-by and visitors.

When working in the field of social work, every idea, even if it seems the most unrealistic and unfeasible, can come true, if you

take your time. You have to try to “invest in yourself” so that you can work qualitatively and move in the right direction with the team. The *Solidarity Coffee* project helps to grow not only the team of service users, but also me as a project coordinator. The most important thing was the very beginning - accepting new challenges, overcoming fears, motivating not only the whole team, but also myself. The first challenge was to form a menu, the first guests at *Solidarity Café*, motivating the team. It’s fun that other communities seeing our activities get “infected” with the idea and become an example. They contact us asking to share experiences at various conferences, sharing success stories or even offering

“When the opportunity arose, we fulfilled this wish!”

help with the implementation of activities. By working and improving in this way, we grew together as a whole team, we wanted not only to break stereotypes, but also to learn more about entrepreneurship. When the opportunity arose, we fulfilled this wish! We have fulfilled our dream; the dream to be more mobile, to find out more about entrepreneurship, to include people with intellectual disabilities in the labour market. And we did this by purchasing a coffee tricycle! Even more fun

is when things you do not even dream of come true and when you do not expect to reach such heights, to become an example to others and to motivate others to take social initiatives. For us as a team, this is a great achievement. Our work has meaning. This is what encourages you not to stop and not to be afraid to say YES to challenges.

Helga Moser

Helga is a researcher and lecturer on the Bachelor and Master Programmes at the Institute of Social Work at FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences in Graz/Austria. In her work she focuses on social work in the (post)migration society, diversity, difference, and discrimination. She has many years of experience working in international projects in the field of education. Bringing in international perspectives definitely enriches her work.

In my professional career as an adult educator one of the issues I have been dealing with is the improvement in the access of disadvantaged groups to institutions and the enhancement of the quality of offers for diverse groups within these institutions. I started dealing with the access of migrants to education during my studies of Educational Science at the University of Graz, Austria. For my diploma thesis, I explored the question of whether and how cooperation between self-organisation of migrants and established adult education (AE) institutions can improve the access of migrants to education. In my quest to answer this question, I went beyond a national framework in order to broaden my perspective.

During a research placement in 2003/2004 I explored the situation in the United Kingdom. In London I found that through outreach activities such as co-

“Considering the perspectives, competences and actual needs of the people you work for is key to ensure that you don’t just talk about them, but that you talk with them.”

operations with community groups, AE institutions were better targeting hard-to-reach groups such as migrants and ethnic minorities. Considering the perspectives, competences and actual needs of the people you work for is key to ensure that you don’t just talk about them, but that you talk with them. When thinking about initiating change and improving equal opportunities, the consideration of different levels is important. Mechanisms hindering equality can be located on the (macro) level of society, on the (meso) level of

organisations, as well as on the individual (micro) level.

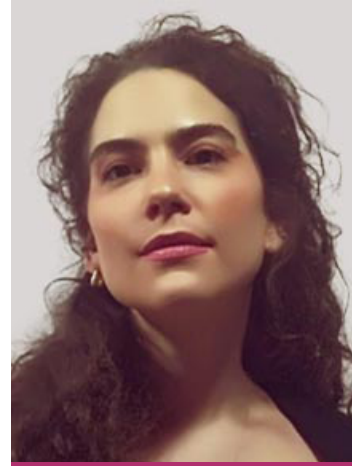
This approach guided the latest project I was involved in, the Erasmus+ strategic partnership *Diversity Capacities – Improving the capacities of Adult Education Institutions to successfully dealing with diversity (DivCap)*.



AUSTRIA

Anna Militsi

Anna is a passionate advocate for anti-oppressive and inclusive education as well as for gender and racial equality. Her studies within the fields of Gender Studies & Child Studies have sharpened her understanding of the various forms of oppression and have motivated her to delve deeper into postcolonial theories to better understand the complexities in teaching different groups along with the way gender and childhoods are discursively constructed.



GREECE

Teaching to migrants comes with a set of complex issues that need to be considered by the trainer. During the discussions and exchange of experiences in this activity, I had the opportunity to further reflect upon the dimension of power relations that are formulated between learner and trainer, especially within the context of transnational migration. I thought about how migrants are being treated as a homogenous group of people instead of individual learners with specific needs and interests. I was particularly keen to discuss the processes of othering that take place within a classroom where the migrant is required to integrate and assimilate based on Western notions of what constitutes the ideal citizen.

“I thought about how migrants are being treated as a homogenous group of people instead of individual learners with specific needs and interests.”

Going to Turkey signified a great change for me in terms of how I perceive the other countries. I was already cognizant of the systemic and social intricacies engulfed in the construction of race, ethnicity, and the nation. But given that this was my first trip to the neighbouring country, it was an opportunity for me to realise hands-on how to incorporate my academic knowledge into practice and how I need to consciously and diligently combat internalised Eurocentric ideals especially when it comes to teach-

ing to migrants. With regard to gender equality and racial equality, it is undeniable that there is still a lot to be done everywhere around the world.

“To actively decolonise education means to create the space for inclusive and affirmatively anti-oppressive education. And this is the kind of trainer that I aspire to become: empathetic, inclusive, actively anti-racist and anti-sexist.”

In a sense, partaking in this project fortified my perception of the world around me as I got to view the world through a different prism. I returned home carrying with me a lot of meaningful experiences and a rejuvenated sense of selfhood.

This trip has been a life-changing experience that would not have been made possible had it not been for the opportunities fostered by Erasmus+ programme. Inclusivity is not taught only through academic endeavours but in engaged collaboration towards a common goal.

“This trip has been a life-changing experience that would not have been made possible had it not been for the opportunities fostered by Erasmus+ programme.”



Jakub Walczyk



POLAND

Jakub is an educator, animator and social researcher, working at the ZAMEK Culture Centre in Poznań, where he co-creates educational initiatives. He is the originator of the *Obrazy Wrażliwe (Sensitive Images)* project, which uses the social and activist potential of cinema to create an inclusive educational programme aimed at various groups. Jakub collaborates with the University of Arts in Poznań and he is also working on his PhD thesis at the Adam Mickiewicz University.

During my studies, visual culture and critical humanities were very important to me. My current practice as an educator has been formed on the basis of the combination of cultural animation, visuality and civic education. I focus on using quality films and TV series as starting points for conversations on topics relevant to society and about current challenges.

“As part of courses in theory of culture and history of media, we map contemporary phenomena, such as patriarchy, class discrimination, social inequalities, symbolic violence, homophobia and speciesism.”

Since 2016, I have used it in workshops that I organise for arts students. As part of courses in theory of culture and history of media, we map contemporary phenomena, such as patriarchy, class discrimination, social inequalities, symbolic violence, homophobia and speciesism. We first watch various TV series that present these phenomena, and then discuss them.

The *Szkoła Patrzenia (School of Looking)* project (2019–2020), as part of which we deepened our knowledge of visual education with support from specialists in different fields, taught me how to apply new educational methods. The project resulted in a workshop entitled *Klisze Wizualne (Visual Clichés)*, during which, based on an episode of the *Handmaid's Tale* TV series and together with students, we discussed issues related to cultural norms, social structures, gender roles, exclusion and social inequality. The

topics presented in the series, their topicality and intertextual references have allowed us to see how the mechanisms of power that supervises non-normativity are reproduced. Since 2019, I have focused on social inclusion with using audiovisual culture.

The *Sensitive Images* project carried out at the CK ZAMEK has been the pinnacle of my work in this area. As part of the project, we present social, civic and activist cinema and offer lectures/discussion panels. All events are adapted to the needs of people with sensory

disabilities by using audio description, subtitles, and sign language interpretation. Both the films and meetings aim at propagating knowledge. We invite guests with whom we discuss topics related to civic engagement, cultural diversity, ecology and social inequality.

The idea of inclusion is also implemented on the programme level. The guest professionals do not only represent the world of science. They include bloggers, reporters and artists. This way the meetings offer an opportunity for different age groups to be involved. The audience is usually formed of people with different ability levels. Being attentive to accessibility and using inclusive language allows

“The topics presented in the series, their topicality and intertextual references have allowed us to see how the mechanisms of power that supervises non-normativity are reproduced.”

me to create a space where the audiences can meet and talk, and where various limitations are removed. Enthusiastic reception of the programme has proved that there is a great need for an inclusive audiovisual culture project that develops film audiences regardless of their sensory limitations.

Therefore, in the future I would like to expand the *Sensitive Images* project with a relational aspect by initiating a discussion club that would promote decentralisation, and which you could join regardless of whether you use spoken or sign language.



Seg Kirakossian

Seg is a 31 years old human rights trainer and film director. While implementing non-formal educational activities for youth and adult people, Seg tries to combine his two fields of expertise to bring positive changes to active community members and leaders across Europe who are interested in acting as multipliers of humanism and respect. He says he is lucky to be one of the founders of the Formation et Sensibilisation de Luxembourg educational organisation.



LUXEMBOURG

I'm really interested in human rights, but as an artist I have always tried to combine this interest with visual arts to understand how art can be used for human rights advocacy. Films that I or our participants shoot during the project have really helped people to be heard.

The first international project which combined the topic of human rights and filmmaking was *MovieDoc* in Dilijan, Armenia. Youth workers from 8 countries were involved in this project, and we also had participants with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It was an opportunity for the participants to communicate and work with people with autism, and at the same time it was an opportunity for autistic people to travel and to be a part of something big. Of course, it was a great challenge for the whole team and me as a trainer. The best feedback for me, however, was a letter from Seryoja's mother - our participant from Russia. She shared how her son had never eaten with other people before the project, but he was finally able so after taking part.

I decided to continue with this experimental method of filmmaking, and we started the DocuSpeech projects: DocuSpeech against Hate Speech and DocuSpeech for Human Rights. During these trainings, youth workers studied how to make their job more visible through

arts and how to increase the emotional impact of their work with short documentaries and visual arts. During the *No Hate* exchange, filmmaking was just one of the different art forms we used in this project

alongside theatre, cinema, music, and painting.

The *Art Inclusive* project was organised for adult learners with the aim of teaching youth workers to use theatre

and cinema in their work involving people with disabilities. Moviemaking as a creative method can be used in really different projects and for a wide range of topics. People we work with always have a problem of being heard despite the fact that nowadays we have social media and anyone can become an influencer.

During these 10 years of travelling and teaching all around the world, I also started my movie titled *PURIFICATION*. It's a poetic documentary which brings together all my observations from 15 countries to show

how people are destroying the world by their greed. I have always tried not to mix my vision as a trainer with my filmmaker's vision, but after all these years, it is becoming harder and harder. So, this last movie of mine also contains a social element, even though my intention was only to make art.

“She shared how her son had never eaten with other people before the project, but he was finally able so after taking part.”

“The topics presented in the series, their topicality and intertextual references have allowed us to see how the mechanisms of power that supervises non-normativity are reproduced.”



Jens Herrmann

Jens is a 48 years old teacher of political education in a small educational collective belonging to the Association Solar e.V. in Berlin, Germany. He has been working in this field for more than 20 years, and his main topics of interest are global learning, anti-racist and discrimination-sensitive education, as well as sustainability. Jens enjoys working in non-hierarchical collectives and wants to make the world a better place for everyone.



GERMANY

When the topic of migration was dominating European headlines in 2015 and European societies were becoming increasingly polarised concerning the opening or closing of borders, between showing solidarity or hate and violence towards refugees and other migrants, it became clear that an educational response to this situation was urgently needed. We intensified our work against stereotypes, the derogation of migrants, and discrimination.

“The project’s aim is to jointly discover, test, and evaluate educational methods which use role playing and simulation to tackle issues surrounding discrimination, migration, and civic education.”

Propaganda and hate speech increasingly poisoned social media channels, and new right-wing and populist movements benefited from this trend in society. However, our educational provision was primarily reaching those who were already critical of these developments in society. We began to investigate our own internalised racist stereotypes and images of “the Other” in order to find new starting points for our work. We realised that both our collective and large parts of the non-formal youth and adult education landscape are very homogeneous and that their structures exclude migrants.

This was the starting point for changes in both us as educators and in the structure of our collective.

We involved migrants in new projects and began a process of mutual empowerment and power-sharing. This means we all learned from each other’s experiences and helped each other acquire competencies. We also did more to dismantle structural barriers to refugees and people with a migration background.

Similarly, in the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project *In the footsteps of a migrant*, launched in 2017, we wanted to integrate migrant perspectives to the greatest degree possible and involve migrants on as many levels as possible. We now want the experiences gained and the method itself to inform the new project *If I were in your shoes*, which focuses on sharing best practice examples. The project’s aim is to jointly discover, test, and evaluate educational methods which use role playing and simulation to tackle issues surrounding discrimination, migration, and civic education. The aim is also to discuss areas of potential improvement and digital use, to test specific applications in the five partner organisations from four European countries and, if deemed suitable, to integrate them.

The pandemic also clearly showed our team just how important the digital suitability of methods will be in the future. Not least because of climate change. With the imminent resuming of project-related travels in Europe we again find ourselves in conflict with our aim of a consistent commitment to climate protection. Frequent flying is not sustainable and is a privilege of the rich industrial nations at the cost of, above all, the world’s most vulnerable people. We therefore will avoid flying as much as possible.



Julija Gudienė

Julija is a 26 years old social worker who deals with people who have mental disabilities at a youth day centre. She also coordinates the activity of a studio theatre, which encourages people with mental disabilities to learn how to express their feelings, relax and develop their imaginary and creative skills. This helps them to overcome their fears and simulates situations and possible solutions through acting.

Working with people who have mental disabilities requires creativity and empathy. While organising and coordinating the activity of the studio theatre I have discovered my own creativity, my flexibility when faced with challenges, my willingness not only to strive to get results, but also to engage in qualitative creative processes. Most importantly, I am able to discover new personal and professional value every day, which can be further developed not only by me, but also by the beneficiaries of the service. When I began coordinating the studio theatre activity, I was very afraid. I was unsure how to organise the activity and what style of activity to use and I even doubted where I should begin. These thoughts worried me. Nevertheless, they did not last long. I also got an opportunity to participate

“Working with people who have mental disabilities requires creativity and empathy.”

in the international project *R.E.A.L.: Reflective Expressive Artistic Learning*, which enabled me to learn and to apply the newly acquired methods in my theatrical activity after returning to my workplace. I started developing a

collection of theatrical activity methods, which is successfully supplemented with new individual, team or creative methods created by us. Well, after taking part in the international

project, communicating with foreign partners, and organising the festival in a virtual manner I have realised that nothing is impossible.

All you need to do is accept the opportunities provided by life itself, distance yourself from the interferences which hinder ideas becoming reality, step outside of your comfort zone, have confidence in yourself and constantly learn.



LITHUANIA

Maren Satke

Maren has been working on (further) education projects since the start of her career 26 years ago. She has been managing EU adult education projects for almost 12 years now. What Maren likes about her job is meeting different people from different countries who work in a wide variety of fields. Her story is also about these meetings and collaborations.

My first EU project was called *Hattrick* and it was about playing football, learning, and integration. The entire project was characterised by personal contact and on-site interaction.

Well, now I have never personally met the partners of the current Erasmus+ project with whom I have been coordinating for the past 6 months! So, when people ask me what the biggest change has been for me in the last few years workwise, the experience of the past one-and-a-half years dominates – the lack of personal contact, apart from on a computer screen. Even though I have actively managed EU projects for many years now and have witnessed many changes in the working environment and in collaborations with pro-

“So, when people ask me what the biggest change has been for me in the last few years workwise, the experience of the past one-and-a-half years dominates – the lack of personal contact, apart from on a computer screen.”

ject partners, this loss of face-to-face meetings has definitely been the most drastic change so far. But have the effects of this restriction only been negative? Not entirely. Of course, I miss the meetings with partners. However, the changes have made a positive contribution to the development of new perspectives in our daily working routines. We were forced to grapple with new technologies and to apply them in practice... I have had to learn new skills and tackle new forms of online collaboration, which I find extremely positive! The exciting project that I am busy coordinating is also taking place thanks

to the pandemic and is on the subject of *Creative Change* and it combines useful resources for managers in the adult education sector, while at the same time creating a hub that brings together people and their experiences, ideas, and suggestions for the project work.



AUSTRIA

Kevin Zatour

Kevin is 26 years old and he has been living in Germany for more than two years, but he is originally from Marseille, France. He has quite an unusual background (graphic designer, bakery manager, dance teacher, sales manager). He ended up doing voluntary work in a café in Germany, which resulted in his decision to stay in that country.

It all started in Marseille, during my civil service trip to Germany. At Eurocircle we organised the trip and then found out about the project *Can Do Refugee*. We collaborated with the project in various activities, both social and educational. Their approach to new people and the activities they offered were interesting and made me see things from new perspectives. We were also able to exchange ideas and activities with each other to get to know each other better.

That's when I met Katrin Kuhla. We shared a lot with each other during the seminar in Marseille, when she took part as a break-dancer. She suggested running a dance workshop with the people from the seminar. This was not planned, but I liked the concept and decided to do it. Giving this workshop I was able to discover in myself a desire to share, to help people to try something new, to take them out of their comfort zone and to help them to discover new talents.

After this, Katrin suggested to run a dance workshop with the organisation *Can Do Refugee* in Greece. The idea was about a dance workshop to learn how to bring together people from different cultures/histories. This sounded like a good fit for me, so I decided to participate. Once in Greece, we met several refugees. It turned out that all the participants were male, while the members of *Can Do Refugee* were all female except me. As a man, I was able to socialise quite easily with the refugees. This would have been the case even without me thanks to their methods of integration.

In my eyes, my dance workshop was like the doorway between the two parties. The ultimate goal was to have a good time together and get to know each other. What better way to bring strangers together, regardless of their origin, culture or gender than through dance. I thought that none of them would dance for fear of judgement or pre-

conceived ideas, but I was astonished to see their desire to try, from a tone of amusement at the beginning to a real desire to do it for the pleasure that it gave them.

We then had other activities which allowed us to exchange more personally with the refugees. Following a request from them, I even had the opportunity to make small videos for social networks. I thought this was a great idea. As a result of all this, I realised that integration into any group is also about gender. This is not a bad thing in itself if it helps to bring people together and have a good time. But it is also about the energy you

bring, the activities that can bring you together and give you some semblance of similarity. No matter where you come from, no matter what language you speak or you're your background is.

None of that would have been possible without Katrin and the wonderful organisation *Can Do Refugee*. This organisation allows you to meet extraordinary people around the world who are working for a clear and generous idea, something holy which brings joy to those who have it. This was my account of this fabulous adventure, which I hope will not be my last. I was able to find my place in a place where I had never imagined I would find myself. For this, I want to thank again all those who took part and the organisation of course!



“In my eyes, my dance workshop was like the doorway between the two parties. The ultimate goal was to have a good time together and get to know each other.”





BELGIUM

Kaat Verbeeke

Kaat has been working in basic education for 20 years, first as a teacher and now as a staff member. Before that, she taught secondary education. In the Ligo Center for Basic Education Ghent-Meetjesland-Leieland Kaat and her colleagues combine their educational mission with connecting activities and projects. In the *Wij, mens-project* she was responsible for planning, organisation and additional funding.

Through sector exchanges between the centers for basic education we saw an example of a successful theatre production with students from Turnhout

and the theater company HETGEVOLG. It inspired us to link the content of the modules “working together”, “acting in a group” and “being sure of yourself” to a creative project. With *Wij, Mens (We, People)*, more than thirty students from different courses told their story in words, images and sound. Initially, the focus was on language, but the project grew into a unique opportunity to showcase talent, promote self-expression and connect. Playing together made the differences fade away. We do not always understand each other, but we do not have to. The diversity of participants was unique, but at the same time it was a great challenge for the directors. How do you get to know everyone? How do you let each actor

“Playing together made the differences fade away. We do not always understand each other, but we do not have to.”

contribute? Do we give everyone enough attention? Does everyone feel at ease in the group? Participants gained the courage to speak, they became more self-confident and furthered their language expression and cultural development. What words and language do we use when we want to express our love (praise) to someone, when we are angry with someone when we want to share a joke, when we want to share our sadness, when we want to play together, when we sing together to celebrate something... We use Dutch as

the language of instruction, but where possible we want to start from the students’ mother tongue and make the link with Dutch. It is crucial that we look for the language specific characteristics of each student. In other words, we want to reflect on how every person (citizen) tries to use language to express essential characteristics of identity.

Aurima Blužienė

Aurima works as a social worker at the Youth Day Centre where she works with adults with intellectual disabilities. She is also the coordinator of the work study, the aim of which is to develop work skills and abilities which she hopes will be used in the future to integrate people with disabilities into the labour market.

DUOday is a day when companies and organisations open their doors to people with disabilities. A person with a disability and an employee of the company spend this working day together - becoming colleagues, forming a duo - DUO. A person with a disability not only becomes acquainted with the company, but also tries out the usual tasks of employees, participates in meetings, communicates with colleagues, and has lunch together. Such a day gives businesses the opportunity to meet employees whose skills in the labour market are unduly underestimated, while people with disabilities gain valuable work experience and learn about the work culture of different organisations. The Youth Day Centre has joined this international initiative. It gave us knowledge first

“Playing together made the differences fade away. We do not always understand each other, but we do not have to.”

and foremost, and knowledge is the first step towards inclusion and diversity. Recipients were able to test themselves in a real workplace and learn new things, get to know different jobs, make new acquaintances, showcase their talents and show that disability does not hinder work. With bold interest and getting to know each other, we open up opportunities for successful cooperation!

Parents of DUOday participants say that after their children with disabilities take part in the initiative, they are more hopeful that they will be able to work and feel needed. After all, it is so important to believe that everyone is needed in the labour market.



LITHUANIA

Piotr Witek

Piotr is a trainer and expert in accessibility and assistive technologies. He works at the Institute for Regional Development Foundation and its company, Utilitia. Plus, he also runs his own website called *Moja Szufłada*.

I coordinate the work of the digital accessibility team and play the role of advisor for local governments, public administrations, university staff and entrepreneurs. I train others in the needs and expectations of recipients and users in the area of available solutions, assistive and supportive technologies and their possibilities. I am blind and through

“I know the needs of people with disabilities, because as a person who has seen it all before, it is easier for me to present problems and design solutions.”

my activities and educational activity I try to make the world around us more open to the needs of people with disabilities. I know the needs of people with disabilities, because as a person who has seen it all before, it is easier for me to present problems and design solutions. I was invited by the Office for People with Disabilities from the Adam

Mickiewicz University in Poznań to present the issue of remote education for people with disabilities. My training was attended by lecturers who for the first time encountered the problem of remote education, the avail-

ability of digital educational materials, and different ways of presenting various content and conducting remote classes. It was interesting to learn that some

of the lecturers were not aware that their classes were attended by people with disabilities and that, until then, they had unconsciously denied them of the chance to get the most out of the classes. The pandemic has shown that young people with disabilities have above-average ICT skills, more developed than their able-bodied peers. This is due to the need to use the latest digital services, such as e- government, online stores and banks, food deliveries and other ordered products, etc.



POLAND

Dominik Hammer

Dominik has been working for the *Katholische Erwachsenenbildung im Lande Niedersachsen e. V.*, The Association for Catholic Adult Education in Lower Saxony, from 2017 until 2021. Since 2018, he has been working in the Erasmus+ Project *NAMED*, which fundamentally changed his outlook of what adult education can be and how it can help to improve people's lives.

One change that working in adult education has brought about in my life is experiencing just how important education can be for learners. In the *NAMED* Erasmus+ project, I learned a

lot about the lives and the educational trajectories of migrant workers in the EU. We conducted an interview study that developed a grounded theory of the education demands of labour migrants in the EU. We also created a model curriculum which was based on the study's findings that address these demands. These interviews were conceptualized as biographic narrative interviews and designed to inquire about life stories, not just life aspects. Structuring one's life story in real time while narrating is demanding. And openly talking about sad and difficult times, about exploitation and unfairness is strenuous and exhausting. My interview partners provided rich

narratives. I am still grateful that they took the time to share their stories. Labour migrants face multiple hurdles when trying to learn. This finding does not really come as a surprise. However, there is a difference between simply stating that language learning is important and learning about an interview partner's fear of opening letters written in a language they don't understand, frightened that these letters might contain bad news. Or learning about their problems with hostile clerks. Learning about the very personal impact of education makes you think differently about how to provide it. You start to think about ways to reach people with long working days, who live dozens of kilometres away from the next educational facility. You consider the psychological toll of experiencing a hostile environment. You make sure to factor in time and energy constraints in your curriculum and you try to make answers as accessible as possible.

“And openly talking about sad and difficult times, about exploitation and unfairness is strenuous and exhausting.”



GERMANY

Damir Hauptman

Ten years ago, Damir started providing non-formal education in the field of culture. His work within the Institute Burja focuses on members of various vulnerable groups, especially immigrants from the nations of the former Yugoslavia living in Slovenia. Damir enjoys peace, tolerance, cultural content and intercultural dialogue. The implementation of his educational activities tries to fulfil all of this.



SLOVENIA

Motivating and involving minority members in non-formal education programs are the topics through which I actively evaluate the results of our work. The great response of the target group gives the organiser of the educational program recognition for the successfully performed work. The size of the ideal group of participants and the methodology of conducting educational workshops are always topics for discussion. Each of us wants to have more homogeneous groups and a more balanced profile of participants.

“We strengthen the knowledge and skills that are extremely important for successfully integrating minority target groups into the majority society.”

The fact is, however, that this happens more rarely in practice. There are some topics that our target audience will always be happy to embrace. However, other important issues are essential for preserving the cultural tradition, developing the target group and reducing the differences between the majority and minority society. These are issues related to specific organisational skills, project and cultural management, and various digital content. We strengthen the knowledge and skills that are extremely important for successfully integrating minority target groups into the majority society. Our Institute Burja deals with educating immigrants, the people of the former Yugoslavia, who live in the Republic of Slovenia for various historical, cultural, political or economic rea-

sons. This group of numerous immigrants in Slovenia is less organised, educated and less proportionally represented in the majority society. They are organised amateurishly and voluntarily into various civil societies, but their organisational limits and rigid approaches are sometimes the biggest obstacles to their development. The older generations find it difficult to leave the management to the younger ones. There is a sizeable intergenerational gap between the first and second generations of immigrants.

There is also a big gap between their traditional and modern cultural tradition. In the light of

this, we perform various analyses for better preparation of their needs in education programs. Based on these, we create a strategy for designing such curricula, with which our participants can more easily identify. In fact, the focus on their linguistic and cultural specificities helped us to develop effective educational programs.

These stem from their actual desires and linguistic and cultural specificities (performing arts or minority culture) and other needs (acquiring additional

“The older generations find it difficult to leave the management to the younger ones. There is a sizeable intergenerational gap between the first and second generations of immigrants. There is also a big gap between their traditional and modern cultural tradition.”

organisational, leadership or digital skills). We also carry out a set of culturally neutral themes, with which we successfully address the intergenerational gap and connect traditional and modern culture (design and fine arts).

In our work, we use both a classical and a participant-oriented approach. We use various flexible approaches and creative and innovative content to motivate our participants. We also involve renowned artists and experts in our teaching, with whom our participants can more easily identify. We choose the dates, location and length of specific workshops very carefully.





TURKEY

Gülhan Güzel

Gülhan started his career after he completed his education in Siirt (Turkey) in 2001. He has been working as vice president of the Siirt Public Education Center providing adult education for six years. He is a voluntary educator in the field of adult literacy. In particular, he is interested in adult literacy education activities for disadvantaged groups.

I was assigned to Siirt Public Education Center as deputy manager in January 2015. I worked in the field of adult education, in particular, the education of illiterate adults. I helped adults to get a second

chance. By using technology more in lessons and appealing to their visual and auditory senses, I tried to facilitate the students' learning. I provided voluntary courses to disadvantaged individuals who do not have any educational experience and I saw how happy they were. I worked in planning and implementing education activities at home for disadvantaged groups without any educational experience due to their physical disabilities. I saw fruitful re-

"I saw that small touches bring great happiness, and I felt happier about working in the field of education of disadvantaged adults."

sults by using technology and appealing to their visual and auditorial senses for education activities at home. I saw that small touches bring great happiness, and I felt happier about working in the field of education of disadvantaged adults. I tried to support disadvantaged adults and help them to overcome their obstacles. My biggest goal is to be

a Public Education Center staff member who provides all kinds of education needed in adult education field in our province, at any time, in any place and for everyone.

Gabi Ogulin Počrvina

Gabi is a teacher with a Master's degree in Human Resource Management and she has been working at RIC Novo mesto for almost 20 years. She enjoys working with people and helping them in their personal or professional development through counselling, development and education. Gabi has an extensive experience leading national and international projects recognised as good practice examples.

Knowledge is becoming a tool of development that can create even greater inequalities in society. Can we talk about justice, equality, and democracy resulting from lifelong learning? System-based regulations and financing are essential for the development of an effective informal education offering. In the last five years, fifteen multi-generational centres in Slovenia have made a huge contribution to providing equal educational opportunities for the older citizens, children and young people with fewer opportunities, as well as families with

"Can we talk about justice, equality, and democracy resulting from lifelong learning?"

poorer parental competencies, the unemployed and job seekers, immigrants, people with special needs or disabilities and Roma families etc. In 2017 I was assigned to manage the large scale Multigenerational Centre Together project (*VGC Together*). We made learning as close to home as possible. We set up free activities which ran a few times a week

or weekly in the areas of personal growth, family and digital literacy, preventive health topics, cooking and creative workshops in the local cultural centres. Over the years, we have extended our offer with photography courses, lectures on sustainable development, dance workshops, foreign language and Slovene language courses, programs to support women in maintaining health and beauty etc. The beginning was challenging, it took a lot of work to get the participants onboard.

By offering a variety of content, we wanted to contribute to raising the quality of life, improving understanding of different generations and differences, expanding the participants' social network, and improving their psychophysical health, self-esteem and self-initiative to solve common problems. Some young unemployed people got a job through volunteering and with our recommendation. This was a joy to see.

Some young unemployed people got a job through volunteering and with our recommendation. This was a joy to see.



SLOVENIA

Vivien Führ

Vivien is a legal specialist in environmental law and founder of Agado. For eleven years she has been assisting people and organisations towards sustainable practices. Vivien enjoys every step of it, and her goal is to empower people to live in a more sustainable way. For Vivien working with adults from different backgrounds with different motivations is a continuous learning process that triggers new approaches to learning for change.



GERMANY

Our goal at Agado is to observe carefully the present, create consciousness and contribute to creating a more sustainable future. We develop empowering and behaviour changing programmes that can affect the lives of people across Europe. I founded Agado in 2010 together with a former colleague.

“We develop empowering and behaviour changing programmes that can affect the lives of people across Europe.”

The year before we had got involved in the work of *Global Action Plan International (GAP I)*, a global network of organisations who work together implementing approaches that empower people across the world to adopt truly sustainable lifestyles. We were very impressed with the work of the network and continue to offer their programmes and approach in Germany.

In 2019 we initiated our first solo project within the Erasmus+ programme that is currently being implemented by six member organisations of *GAP I*. The project is called *FoodTalks – Shifting eating patterns through education and training*. We have been working on educational material for caterers and guests. On the one hand these action-kits are intended to be used as a teaching tool (along with our expertise) to enable caterers and their contracting authorities to provide more ethical, environmentally aware, and healthier options for their guests. On the other hand, it allows guests them-

selves to be more prepared to make better decisions regarding the food they purchase and consume.

Our network focuses on behaviour change, so we decided to take on the challenge of creating a holistic and sustainable change in the canteen and catering sector. In this sector both food waste and unhealthy and unsustainable eating habits represent a major challenge.

On a political level these problems are already being addressed but political decisions need to be supported by the awareness and behaviour of providers and consumers.



FOOD & HEALTH



FOOD & ENVIRONMENT



FOOD & ETHICS



FOOD & WASTE

Harm van Dijk

Harm is an engineer, a manager, a coach and a supervisor but most of all a talented initiator of *G1000* which is a Dutch citizens' initiative that aims to bridge the gap between citizens and government through decision-making based on dialogue between citizens who participate through a lottery. *G1000* has developed several tools to enable citizens to play a meaningful role in new forms of democracy.

The *Paris Climate Agreement* in 2015 motivated Steenwijkerland, a municipality in the east of the Netherlands, to take measures to become energy-neutral in the near future. In order to decide the best way to realise this ambition and to gain broad support for the proposed measures, the municipality asked *G1000* to organise and facilitate citizen deliberations.

As a first step, 7,000 citizens were invited through the lottery to participate in a one-day Citizen Summit about becoming energy neutral. During this Summit, the participants entered into a conversation with people they did not know beforehand. In 3 consecutive rounds, with each round consisting of another group of 4 people, they spoke with 9 other people, each with her/his own perspective. There were conversation rules to make sure that participants listened to each other and were not focused on convincing others of their opinion. In this way, participants felt heard.

After this first round, there was a willingness to think in terms of shared interest. That willingness was further strengthened during the afternoon talks, when groups of 8 people discussed specific sub-themes. At the end of the day, each group had come up with a proposal. A key point was that the participants did everything themselves, within a clear and safe framework. This led to identification with the result and powerful motivation, something they realised with complete strangers. After this first day, 64 participants wanted to further develop the ideas from Summit.

In the following months, they worked on several proposals one step at a time, receiving input from experts with a broad spectrum of backgrounds/opinions. This process could be followed and commented on by anyone in the public via a digital platform. Then all proposals were presented to panels of citizens, politicians and experts. After these presentations, the participants voted on all proposals and the remaining proposals formed the *Citizens' Decree*, that was presented to the Mayor and local politicians.

“This participatory method leads to breaking barriers in the community, as people from very different backgrounds work together for a better future.”

This *G1000* in Steenwijkerland is one of the ways to increase citizen participation on a local, regional, national and even international level. The methodology used in these deliberative processes varies, but in all cases “learning” is an aspect that is considered to be a central point. This participatory method leads to breaking barriers in the community, as people from very different backgrounds work together for a better future. In their deliberations, the participants involve several kinds of knowledge: not only the mere technical or scientific aspects, but also ethics, narrative and aesthetics play a major role when designing proposals to become climate neutral. Due to this method, people participate in the process with heart, head and hands, which makes for a rich learning process.



NETHERLANDS



Manu Busschots

Manu is a sociologist, a researcher and the founder of *Climate Conversations* which offers accessible (online) workshops, training courses and masterclasses that help to reduce our individual climate footprint and, instead, increase our handprint by having a good climate conversation with others about topics such as living, eating, consuming, transport or vacation. The foundation wants to make climate-friendly choices a matter of course. It uses insights from climate psychology to offer people hope, humour and perspective for action.

Does the topic of the “climate” ever come up in your work, either indirectly or directly? If so, you will probably notice that this is not always easy. The subject evokes many strong opinions and emotions. Maybe you want to be a bit more confident and respond in a pleasant way. Not pointing fingers, but being more personal and practical. In the *Climate Conversations* workshops you learn how to do this effectively. In six two-hour meetings, you and others explore what you can do to make your life more climate-friendly, in a way that suits your own situation and goals. These workshops were already very successful in England as *Carbon Conversations*. The materials and working methods were adapted to the Dutch context and are varied and playful. Interest in the workshops is steadily growing in the Nether-

“The *Climate Conversations* are not depressive conversations with lists of prohibitions and commandments.”

lands. Broadly speaking, there are two main groups of participants: the frontrunners/pioneers who have been involved with the climate for years and who like to meet others to exchange experiences, and also a group of people who

want to familiarise themselves with what they can do to live in a more climate-friendly way. The aim is to make climate-friendly choices the new normal together. The workshops provide tools for a good

conversation. The *Climate Conversations* are not depressive conversations with lists of prohibitions and commandments. This training clarifies how behavioural change around the climate is brought about or hindered (climate psychology).



NETHERLANDS

Emile van Rinsum

Emile is the director of RMC Foundation which seeks to make Rotterdam a nature and environmentally friendly city where it is good, safe and healthy to live. RMC organises low-key activities aimed at housing and energy and supports green initiatives for residents, and advises on urban nature, climate policy, spatial planning, waste policy and mobility.

Rotterdam Environment Centre RMC succeeds in getting a broad cross-section of inhabitants involved in environmental measures! Mimi Slauerhoff developed the Environment Coach

course for the RMC, and she has trained over 350 environment coaches since 2011. “We go to the people to recruit future coaches. We go to the mosques, the Cape Verdean club, women’s groups, the already existing community networks. When we approach them, they are almost always interested in getting involved. These networks ask key players in their community whether they would like to participate. In this way, we have attracted many people who are not normally involved in envi-

“The future environment coaches learn how they can save energy themselves and which other sustainable measures they can take at home.”

ronment protection or fighting climate change. The fact that saving energy is good for the wallet also helps enormously to motivate people to take action” states Mimi. The future environment coaches learn how they can save energy themselves and which other sustainable measures they can take at home. They also learn how they can share this information with small groups of people in their own communi-

ty. At the end, the participants receive a certificate which enables them to work in their own community: on their own street, in the parents’ room at school or with fellow tenants. To this end, the environment coaches make use of large E-cupboards

in central places, such as community centres, libraries and residents’ groups. These E-cupboards contain all kinds of materials that can be used to save energy, an energy savings matrix and a quiz.



NETHERLANDS

Lidwien Vos de Wael

Lidwien is a passionate lifelong learning promotor. For many years, she has been supporting organisations with local, national and European projects on literacy, education in rural areas and adult learners' week. Since 2020 Lidwien has been contributing to EPALE with good practices on sustainability and adult education. She also owns own a small organic vineyard.



NETHERLANDS

Since the European Commission was preparing a *Recommendation on Education for Environmental Sustainability*, during the preparation phase for this document, a public survey was sent out in 23 European languages in 2021. One of the outcomes relates to "ways to learn for the environment and sustainability". A good first way is through "more practical hand-on ways to learn, including learning outdoors". At IVN Nature Academy we offer a huge variety of educational activities that usually have an important outdoor component. The overall motto is: Learn, participate, experience! Independent local chapters organise activities, courses, projects and campaigns for all ages. Learning by do-it-yourself is key. The national office supports and develops course materials. The Academy provides both off- and online training for professionals (teachers, local policymakers, recreation entrepreneurs, etc.) and volunteers. There are long

"The overall motto is: Learn, participate, experience!"

term activities, like the a very popular Nature Guide Course which runs for 18 months and the brand-new *Climate Course* (8 x 2 hours). But there are lots of shorter activities too, like nature walks, and lectures about gardening, insects, mushrooms,

etc. IVN also organises educational activities at specific locations targeting special groups: at women's shelters, nursing homes, centres for asylum seekers, garden centres and museums.

The vision for education can be summarised as Experience is education. The activities should be accessible and enjoyable. It is never just about passing on knowledge, there are plenty of interactive forms and games too. The didactics are engaging and there is always an active element.

Bastiaan Weldring

When asked to define himself Bastiaan always emphasizes his background in cultural anthropology. It shaped his ambitions in work and life and showed him the seemingly endless societal matters globally and it also taught him about the unique power people deploy in the face of challenge. That paradoxical context of challenge turned into opportunity is where he feels at his best: professionally and personally.

Kletsmaatjes is all about low profile online chatting. At first glance it sounds very simple. It is, but it also gives newcomers the opportunity to practice crucial basic (life) skills, necessary to find

their way in a new country. Potential geographical or physical obstacles are evaded, and even COVID-19 measures aren't a barrier anymore, because of the digital context of the project. And last but not least: everyone can be a part of *Kletsmaatjes*! The online dimension ensures people with disabilities can participate, both as a volunteer and a newcomer. We have visually impaired and/or blind, as well as wheelchair bound and older volunteers that are confined to their own homes but who wish to stay socially involved. Even though there is no in-person meeting, pairs often develop a close bond which continues after the end of the pro-

"Volunteers often act as gatekeepers into society. This exchange is reciprocal: volunteers often emphasize how much they learn from their newcomer buddy."

ject. Thanks to the full digital setup participants only need three things: access to the internet, a computer or smartphone and willingness to both talk and listen for about an hour at a time for 26 weeks.

Kletsmaatjes has turned challenges into opportunities. Born in times of COVID-19 measures (lockdown) it helped prevent newcomers from becoming socially isolated and helped them to continue making progress in the Dutch language. The backbone of the project consists of our wonderful volunteers. Some of them possess a natural talent in how to make a sincere connection with newcomers, others

rely on the webinars and practice materials that we offer. No matter how they do it though, almost all of them share similar core values regarding universalism and equality.

Volunteers often act as gatekeepers into society. This exchange is reciprocal: volunteers often emphasize how much they learn from their newcomer buddy.



NETHERLANDS

Jolita Kavaliauskienė

Jolita is a social worker at the Young Adults Day Center. She has been working with young adults with intellectual disabilities for 13 years with the goal of giving people with disabilities the opportunity to engage and actively participate in physical activity and thus successfully integrate into society through sports activities. For Jolita, communicating and working with young adults with disabilities is a learning experience which enables us to learn new skills together and also build true friendships and make each other happy.



LITHUANIA

A few years ago, I was invited to participate in an international project that was conducted in English. This suggestion shocked me because my knowledge of English was poor and I was very scared of what others might think of me. I felt panicked and scared about this challenge. Then I realized that I couldn't just stand still. I needed

“Erasmus+ projects for me are a window into the future, changing attitudes towards life, work, contributing to a full-fledged personality development and encouraging me to do more in life.”

to learn new things, accept new challenges and no matter how hard they were, through overcoming them I began to grow and develop. So, I am currently coordinating two major international sports projects. The first one, *I Do Sport: Facing Intellectual Disabilities through Sport*, wants to encourage people with mobility and intellectual disabilities to play sports as actively as possible, to promote voluntary sports and to provide equal opportunities for everyone to play sports, to help them

understand the importance of sport for health. This transnational project is a great tool for social inclusion and integration.

During the implementation of this project, I came up with the idea to create individual sports programs for each service recipient of our institution according to their physical abilities and needs. The second project, *U.A.N. Sport - Uniqueness-Abilities-Normalities Sport*, aims to promote more equal opportunities for people with mental, physical and other disabilities

and to encourage people (with or without disabilities) to spend their leisure time more actively. It is aimed at international practice and the exchange of ideas. Erasmus + projects for me are a window into the future, changing attitudes towards life, work, contributing to a full-fledged personality development and encouraging me to do more in life.

As I took on new challenges, I saw myself as a competent and mature personality in both the professional and personal field but someone who is still learning and growing.



ESTONIA

Kadi Kass

Kadi Kass is a volunteer trainer and adult educator in safety at the Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation (Naiskodukaitse) in Estonia. She also works as a voluntary youth girl scouts' leader. Kadi is currently studying for her second master's degree in Community Development and Social Welfare at the University of Tartu.

Between the end of the year and the beginning of the following one it's customary to reflect on the last 12 months. What interesting things have happened? Have I experienced or learned any-

thing new? I find myself feeling happy to have participated in a great European Solidarity Corps project called Community Impact in Practice. So, let me share this experience with you. A seminar was organised by SALTO European Solidarity Corps and, in particular, SALTO Resource Centre in Vienna. The participants were youth workers or educators from Erasmus+: *Youth in*

Action Programme countries. I sincerely believe that the combination of knowledge with practical tips will empower adults to learn and participate.

What I enjoyed the most was learning from, and sharing with, other participants. Different experiences and examples, shared ideas but also fruitful discussions on conceptualising or finding solutions were really valuable. As an adult educator I also

“I sincerely believe that the combination of knowledge with practical tips will empower adults to learn and participate.”

found myself noticing different methods used by facilitators. So, although it was not the main aim of the seminar, I found myself learning about how to educate as well. Sharing is caring!

Kateřina Pávková

Kateřina is an Andragogy Master's degree graduate from Jan Amos Komenský University in Prague. She is currently working as a teacher/instructor in the Education and Further Learning Division at the National Heritage Institute. She has participated in the preparation and running of educational programmes, workshops and seminars which enable the general public to discover the value of our heritage and build a long-lasting relationship with it.

In autumn 2019, I brought to life a two-year, pilot educational programme for older adults, called the *Heritage Academy of the Third Age*, run on the National Heritage Institute premises. Participants, who were 55 or older,

enrolled onto the programme, and were then divided into two groups. The goal of the educational programme is to educate older citizens in the field of heritage conservation and enhance their existing understanding and knowledge of the field. Through both theoretical studies and real-life examples, the students have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of historic monuments and the preservation of our cultural heritage. Consequently, their attitudes towards our heritage may automatically cross over with their everyday lives. They can discover and explore the values created by our ancestors with more understanding. The curriculum has been structured so that the course provides practical

information and advice, encourages the participants to pursue further studies, and possibly guides them to take part in voluntary activities in the field of heritage conservation. When the epidemiological situation became worse again, we could not switch to remote learning with this target group, as many of the students found working with PCs too complicated, and

“Through both theoretical studies and real-life examples, the students have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of historic monuments and the preservation of our cultural heritage.”

their computer skills were minimal. I recorded some of the subsequent lectures with the teachers and made them available to the students via a *YouTube* channel. Despite the problems the educators had to deal with during the first course of the two-year study programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been demonstrated that older citizen education in the field of heritage conservation has positive and beneficial outcomes from the education and learning point of view.

José Antonio Dorta

José Antonio is a social science teacher in Santa Lucia's adult education centre, which is located in Vecindario, on the island of Gran Canaria. He teaches Social science subjects to secondary school pupils as well as philosophy on the baccalaureate course, and he has been teaching for more than 30 years.

My story is about the neighbourhood, tomatoes and Santa Lucia's adult education centre. Well, how did the project emerge? It emerged partially due to the fact that we were not allowed to participate in a project called Canarias a pie de foto because it was not aimed at adult education centres. In any case,

“Interviews to relevant people linked to the history of the school, and a couple of them were recoded as a documentary.”

there was an interest within a community of teachers to work collaboratively towards innovation and towards connecting the curriculum with practical questions. It was an interdisciplinary work within the three fields that compose the secondary ed-

ucation for adults: social, linguistic and scientific. The project was developed during the celebration of the festivity day of the Canary Islands (30th May).

To mark the occasion, an exhibition of the materials created was put on show in the education centre.

Which outcomes and activities have been developed? Visits to de la Zafra Museum dedicated to the history of tomatoes in the council and on the Canary Islands. Interviews to relevant

people linked to the history of the school, and a couple of them were recorded as a documentary. More interviews to older people about the history of the town and the farming of tomatoes, and a Photo hunt.



CZECH REPUBLIC



SPAIN

Boba Markovic Baluchova



SLOVAKIA

Boba has been working as a communications manager at the Platform for Development organisations – Ambrela in Bratislava, Slovakia. In 2011 she founded the DocUnion NGO, focusing on Media and literacy trainings for adult learners and the blogging platform, Media about Development. Boba likes to learn and to support others in their learning process too. Her goal is to transform people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds into critical media consumers.

Because of my experience of growing up during the Communist regime, I am particularly sensitive to propaganda and manipulation in media and public space. Therefore, I have always been passionate about solution journalism, hope-based communication and responsible media coverage of global challenges.

During my university studies and local volunteering, I used to look for opportunities to cooperate with organisations dealing with international development agenda, human rights and media production at the same time. As a DocUnion founder and educator I have been providing global journalism and MIL trainings for adult learners – mostly future international volunteers and development field workers as part of their pre-departure preparation. It is always a big challenge for them to adapt to the local context, to understand the cultural norms, to communicate with new partners from vulnerable communities and to cover this unique experience from abroad in responsible and ethical ways.

This global journalism component has been integrated into my MIL workshops. The learners learn how to deconstruct and analyse particular articles (e.g.

reportages from low-income countries), as well as how to create their own media products and cover global challenges from Global South without manipulating and blackmailing the audience – by using the colonial language of White saviours from the Global North and the poverty marketing tools. Thanks to practical examples from the field and a comparison of suitable and unsuitable images and narratives from the real campaigns, there is a lot of food for thought for all participating adult learners.

“I have always been passionate about solution journalism, hope-based communication and responsible media coverage of global challenges.”

I have also been working for Platform for Development Organizations – Ambrela which gathers 28 non-governmental organisations in Slovakia with a focus on development cooperation, humanitarian aid, global development education and sustainable development in low-income countries.

As a communications manager and researcher, I am responsible for the *Faces of Migration* campaign as a part of the project entitled *SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens in the EU* implemented within the framework of the Development Education and Awareness Raising program.

It aims to raise awareness about diversity, tolerance and coexistence of people from different cultures through specific life stories and looks at the migration phenomenon through the prism of Sustainable development goals (SDGs). We try to describe life conditions of migrants, as well as refugees and the reasons for forced migration of vulnerable communities to the general public via communication workshops, online discussions, thematic webinars, hope-based stories and other responsible media products.



Mehmet Kaya

Mehmet works as vice manager at a Public Education Center whose target audience are adults. Mehmet has worked with adults and, in particular, disadvantaged groups during his professional life and he has had the chance to observe and monitor them.

There was a woman who came to the Balıkköy Dursunbey Public Education Center every day at a time when the course applications were extremely busy. She attracted attention. She had a hearing-impaired child. At first, it seemed like she was hiding the child behind her back, and that she was about to say something. Being a mother of a disabled child meant she faced obstacles, challenges and prejudices. Her struggle was clearly written all over her face, as she was a single parent. She told us about Ismail's health problems, his struggles. She told us, in tears, that Ismail had finished primary and middle school with great difficulty. After middle school, they didn't know what to do with him, and he spent

“Could we help Ismail?”

most of his time at home. He was bored and had become violent. He was an introverted and shy boy. As Ismail grew up, his problems increased, both he and his family had become desperate. So, what could the Public Education Center do for

them? Could we help Ismail?

We started a computer science course just for Ismail so that

he could go outside and he stopped being bored. He was still cautious, introverted, shy and angry.

As time went on, he started to smile and ask questions. He started to relax. At the end of the course, Ismail was able to communicate. He had grown in confidence and was sensitive to the events in his environment.



TURKEY

Bożena Chrostowska

Bożena has a PhD in Humanities and she is an educator and animator as well as a lecturer at the Department of Social Pedagogy and Educational Research Methodology at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. She also is the initiator and implementer of activities which create a conscious and friendly academic environment for autistic people. Moreover, Bożena holds the position of Expert for Educational Support of People on the Autistic Spectrum at the University.

Iam the mother of a child who is on the autistic spectrum. He lives alone and copes with his life just as well

as any other young person. When he was younger, I and several other parents of autistic children started a self-help group to support each other and share our experiences. Then, as a lecturer at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, I was invited to the School of Social Animators, who work with people with disabilities. I liked the energy and mindfulness accompanying this education so much that I enrolled at the school and I had to do an animation project as part of my graduation. I chose a topic which I knew inside out - supporting people on the autistic spectrum. I implemented this project at my University. I started working with the Center as a volunteer and I saw how big the need for action in this area was.

“I support students in understanding their rights, in their relations with teachers and in what they need at any given moment.”

Then, I became an expert in educational support for people with autism. I support students in understanding their rights, in their relations with teachers and in what they need at any given moment. I conduct trainings for academic teachers about autism, what problems autistic people face and what resources they have, how to work with them and how to support and understand them.

For the World Autism Awareness Month, together with my students, we promoted awareness about autism.

We organized various initiatives, events, film screenings and workshops. Recently, I have

started studying Transcultural Positive Psychotherapy. I am training to become a consultant, and then perhaps a psychotherapist in the field of positive psychotherapy. This involves looking at a person holistically, taking into account not only their difficulties, but also their unconscious resources, abilities and skills.



POLAND



BELGIUM

Greet Dierckx

Greet is a teacher at ENCORA, the largest municipal center for adult education in Flanders. She teaches adults who have few opportunities to become future childcare assistants and she coordinates the international projects at her center.

The Encora training program *Child-care assistant* is partnering with a Brasschaat elementary school to establish an international collaboration with a South African preschool. Because of the

Coronavirus, we had to cancel a two-week international internship in South Africa. So the team looked for an alternative.

With the Inanda project, we want to make the connection between our own living environment and the big challenges facing our planet in order to make the world a better place. By bringing children, child-care workers and teachers closer together, we enable them to stimulate each other to improve their understanding, experience and improve the world. We try to achieve this by engaging people in a conversation in which everyone participates equally. Everyone was asked the simple

“What do we want to know about each other?”

question: “What do we want to know about each other?” Teachers and child-care workers are encouraged to work together through conversation and exchange around topics relevant to their profession. The topics are chosen by all participating teachers and child-care workers. It is important that this happens in equal partnership where everyone is on-

board to make a relevant and meaningful contribution.

Teachers and child workers are given the opportunity to work

as professionals in a way that would otherwise be unattainable. They come into contact with other cultures and discover how that culture approaches working with young children. Differences and similarities were discussed and ideas and tips were exchanged. The starting point here is that every child has interesting things to tell. Adults only have to facilitate and support the conversation.

Anna Duda-Maczuga

Anna is an assistant lecturer at the Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. She specialises in the conservation of stone sculptures and architectural elements, and she is involved in teaching, in a practical sense mainly. Conservation, as a discipline, is very broad in terms of the range of knowledge and skills that need to be mastered, and at the same time quite a niche field of study.

We provide adult education in the very narrow field of artefact conservation, and we face challenges specific to the field. The first is to master the highly interdisciplinary subject. Not only are there manual skills required to work with a historic object, but you also need knowledge of chemistry, arts history and physics. In our work, not only do we use chisels and brushes, but also microscopes and lasers. Basic education lasts as long as six years. The second challenge is the need for ongoing cooperation with international communities. Due to the niche nature of conservation as a field, it is difficult to create a close-knit community. We are also keen to reach beyond those in the industry to show that conservation as a science goes beyond what it is commonly thought. So far, digital elements have been somewhat of an add-

“Due to the niche nature of conservation as a field, it is difficult to create a close-knit community.”

on to the physical exhibition. But the constraints resulting from the pandemic have made us understand that if we want

to reach our audience with knowledge, we need to reverse the relationship. Although the exhibition features physical exhibits, we have prepared the entire course and narrative of the exhibition through the prism of digital reception.

This is a big challenge for us because it is something we have not done before. As part of the work on the exhibition,

we have developed our own method for creating such events. As a result, it is now possible to replicate exhibitions and other activities relatively easily, because we have already blazed the digital trail. It is difficult to say whether the word ‘exhibition’ still fits with such an educational activity.



POLAND

Wilma Greco

Wilma is a teacher and volunteer at the Casa Circondariale (Prison) in Agrigento, Sicily. Her dream is a truly inclusive society in which the human rights of every single person are respected, where everyone can achieve their own well-being, displaying their skills and talents, while sharing them with the community at large.

The story I tell is born within the walls of a prison, the place where citizens serve a sentence for their crimes. A place that is too often a social wasteland in which those who, due to personal difficulties, are removed from any future hopes of active citizenship. Others, at a some point along the way, took the wrong path, and now they recognise the error of their ways. In any case, the prison remains a place that we would all prefer

“A place that is too often a social wasteland in which those who, due to personal difficulties, are removed from any future hopes of active citizenship.”

did not exist. Those inside are closed, but we on the outside are also closed inside, when we would prefer not to see the prisoners, and perhaps throw away the key. Yet all of us have experienced the times of lockdown, which in a certain way have brought us closer to those whose imprisonment is a daily condition, a slow crawl through the passing of days.

When I resumed my work as a volunteer amid one thousand precautions and difficulties, I was looking for a project that would allow me to fill the empty days, past and future, with meaning. This project allowed inmates to work independently and did not require the active involvement of the prison administration, which always complains of staff shortages

and a disproportionate amount of work. We joined the national competition aimed at giving a voice to the inmates from all prisons in Italy, free to express themselves through writing stories, drawing and recipes.

For the painters inside, the mail art represents the voice and the thought that cross the bars and reach the society of the free. The culinary recipes tell of how in prison it is possible to cook a very complicated dish with makeshift means, such as a camp stove, pot lids and plastic cutlery.

The stories told by inmates (*writers inside*) in the forms of poetry or short stories are always surprising when one considers that many of them try their hand at writing for the first time, and without much preparatory education. Creative and artistic production in prison represents a real tool of resilience, an opportunity to attribute meaning to one's experience, transforming it into learning opportunities where we use those potentials and skills inherent in one's personality which are never explored.

This gives me a sense of satisfaction in my role as an educator and rewards my stubbornness to believe that the most beautiful flowers are those that bloom in the most unexpected and almost always discarded lands.



ITALY



Ilona Zakowicz

Ilona is a pedagogue and culture expert. She has worked with and advocated for older people for over 10 years. She is an academic teacher, trainer, author and co-author of over 30 academic publications. Ilona is also a member of national and international project and research teams, researcher and social affairs manager at the Opieka i Troska Foundation (coordinator of a Local Activity Centre and Senior Citizens' Club).



POLAND

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every area of our lives. It has had a particularly strong impact on older people, and naturally also on their educators, whose task was, and still is, to adapt methods, techniques and forms of work to new circumstances. COVID-19 prevented us from holding classes in traditional face-to-face formula, but we were able to continue using remote working tools. The transition from meetings organised in Wrocław cafés to the Virtual Cafe UTW went smoothly. This is because members of the group for many years had participated in computer courses. We were able to select remote communication tools that met the needs, capabilities and expectations of the group. The Internet has helped older citizens function better during the pandemic. It has not replaced the contacts and

“The pandemic has cut off older people who had been digitally excluded from various forms of contact or activation.”

activities carried out offline, but it has provided a substitute for them. Remote communication tools have enabled me to continue meeting older learners. I observed that older people

demonstrating low levels of digital competences (or lack of them) are more likely to experience the effects of social isolation resulting, among other things, from the inability to actively participate in educational activities. The pandemic has cut off older people who had been digitally excluded from various forms of contact or activation. Not only were they unable to take part in activities, but they were also unable to confront information gleaned from radio and television with other sources of information, which added to their anxiety. Older citizens who did not have a connection or digital competence were thus left on the fringe of social life.



ITALY

Hanna Urbanovich

Hanna is a 31-year-old Project Manager and Adult Educator from Belarus. She currently lives in Italy and she is the co-founder of EduVita, Centre for Lifelong Learning in Lecce, Italy. Anna is the former assistant director at the Institute for Adult Education and the University of the Golden Age in Belarus. She has a master's degree in Pedagogy, and her particular fields of interest are non-formal education, lifelong learning, adult education and intercultural communication.

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, EduVita was a recently established cultural association. We immediately saw

the risk that all of our projects and plans for adult learning might dematerialise under the looming threat of a global tragedy. Yet time, patience, and creative resilience have revealed the opposite to be true. Last year, we decided to reformulate our language courses for seniors and offer them in hybrid mode, thus guaranteeing alternate attendance, using a more dynamic model than entirely online teaching. We have equipped our office with the necessary technology for this transition (video projector, microphones) and adapted the curriculum to allow for a blended interaction. We noticed that this new approach engaged and motivated our students.

“This is an educational model of lifelong learning that involves the older learners in a multidimensional learning process.”

They were given the opportunity to practice English and profit from the cutting-edge technological experience. After the first phase of experimentation, in order to make the blended-mode lessons more interactive and rewarding, we invited young volunteers from a local association, Vulcanicamente. The results were remarkable. From this stimulating mutual understanding between generations, the idea for a new intergenerational initiative was born. Inspired by the well-known model of the *Human Library*. It motivated

students who wish to share with international young people. After a few weeks, the initiative was given a name: *Vita-Diaries*.

This is an educational model of lifelong learning that involves

the older learners in a multidimensional learning process, from linguistic to emotional, from logical-narrative to intercultural, finishing at the crucial pivot of intergenerational dialogue.

Antoine Burret

Antoine is a French sociologist specialized in the field of third-places. He played an important historical role in the emergence and structuring of the concept in French-speaking countries, having also published the first doctoral thesis and the first book on the subject. He has also actively contributed to the birth and development of several emblematic third places and structuring networks, both grassroots and institutional.

I am a great believer in the empowerment offered to citizens by third places. Third places are seen as places where a community can meet and socialise. Nowadays, these places are often embodied by what are known as fab labs, maker spaces or more generally community places that value doing things

“Third places are designed to enable exchanges and discussions between different people on a daily basis.”

together. In the field of education, some authors postulate that extracurricular activities, or the spaces between school and home, are third places for students. Several studies show that these plac-

es play a major role during adolescence, in particular. Recent articles show that the impossibility of using third places is one of the major criteria in the suffering experienced by students during the health crisis.

However, when we talk about third-party learning spaces, we are referring to certain meeting places set up within schools and known as fab labs. These are physical locations within the school grounds that are supported by technical, legal and human resources. Their ambitions are multiple: to allow students and teachers to experiment with new practices, to mobilise multidisciplinary skills, to open up to others, to build civic knowledge, to learn to make objects.

Third places are designed to enable exchanges and discussions between different people on a daily basis. More formally, the economic model of many third places is often based on the organisation of training to support a return to work or simply to help each other. I am also thinking of support activities for business creation or, more broadly, mediation and popular education activities. For example, since 2014 the Fondation de France has relied almost exclusively on third places to carry out its programme dedicated to helping people in precarious situations return to work.

“I think that these places should also be thought of as resource centres for “citizenship training.”

In third places, the question of training is also addressed through efforts to transfer knowledge. Many third places work towards documentation and dissemination of their knowledge. Users are encouraged to describe what they make, create or do on knowledge-sharing platforms along the lines of Wikipedia. This is so that the knowledge can be disseminated and others can take advantage of it: everything is disseminated under free licences.

I think that these places should also be thought of as resource centres for “citizenship training”.

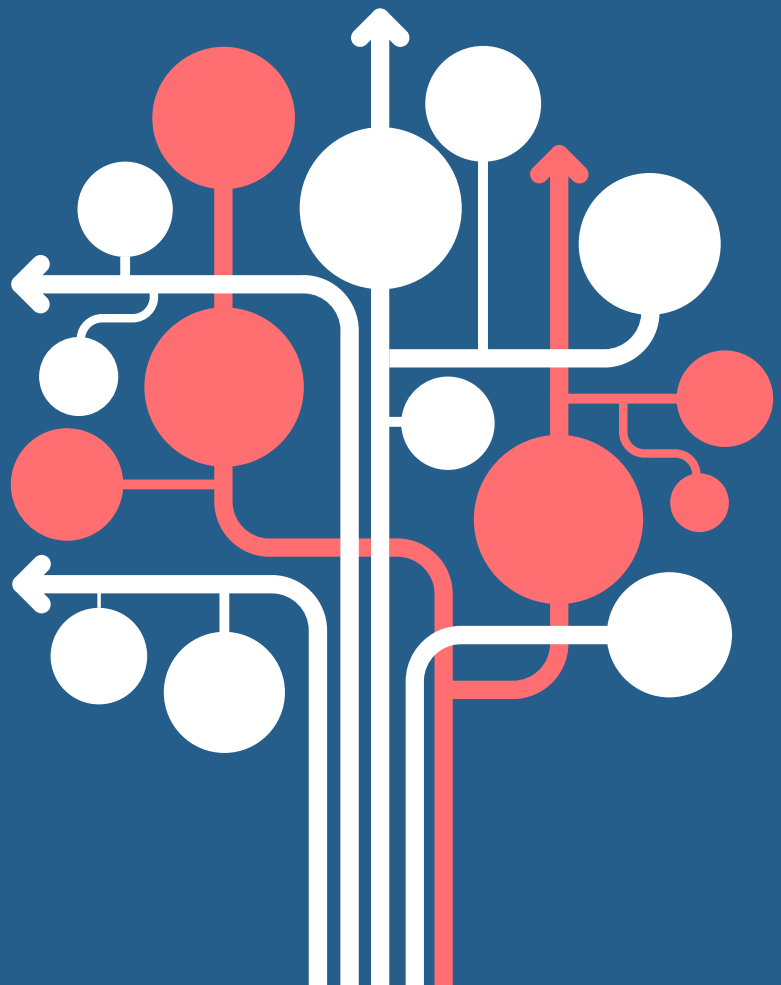


FRANCE



2.

Digital Transition
and the opportunities of
blended learning



Rinske Faas

Rinske is a Digi-Taalhuis coordinator based in Breda. As a graduate of the University of the Arts, she always tries to come up with creative solutions in her work as a Digital Language House coordinator.

Being given an iPad but having no idea what to do with it, using a browser or a self-scanner at the supermarket. These are examples of questions that volunteers at the Digi-walk-in session of the Digi-Taalhuis in Breda receive twice a week. This walk-in session was already set up before the coronavirus pandemic and was very well attended. Or at least it was until the lockdown threw a spanner in the works and the library had to close its doors. However, the pandemic simultaneously accelerated a project that I have been dreaming of for a long time. *Digimaatjes* (Digi-mates) was launched and became a success!

The project involves pairing a person who has a digital literacy learning need with a volunteer. The volunteer and learner start by getting to know one another and subsequently meet weekly for a total of 10 weeks to work on the topic at hand. For example, there was someone with a great passion for music who wanted to learn how to download songs from the Internet. This person was then paired with someone who shared the same passion or interests. Of course, participants can also ask their family (children or grandchildren) for help. However, they often tend to simply take over, while the old people indicate that they would like to learn it themselves.

“This coupling of young and old was valuable for both generations.”

The purpose of a Digi-mate is precisely to ensure that a participant is able to send those photos via WhatsApp or to create a secure password upon completion of the programme.

This coupling of young and old was valuable for both generations. Young people come into contact with people they would not normally come into contact with and were able to learn about the different ways in which people live their lives.

“There is a degree of social pressure, but there is also curiosity and the desire to keep up with new developments.”

The insight that certain (digital) skills are not a given for everyone was also valuable to them. For participants, it often represented a reacquaintance with the computer. Some friendships were made and for many it was an introduction to a new world they want to learn even more about. A striking feature of *Digimaatjes* is that the meetings weren't digital; the pairs themselves met weekly in the library but kept a safe distance. It's not really possible to explain to someone what functions or apps they can use virtually.

Despite barriers that some people perceive, I also see a certain curiosity among the older people towards the many digital possibilities. We see many people coming in with requests like “I need to learn how to use a computer”, or, more specifically, “I need to make a reservation for a museum”. There is a degree of social pressure, but there is also curiosity and the desire to keep up with new developments.

Digimaatjes is a great example of how to effectively contribute to strengthening or developing digital skills in a rapidly changing society in an accessible way. Participants make huge digital leaps in a short space of time and most lose their fear of computers or smartphones. Above all, people discover what digitisation can add to their daily lives and that it can even be fun. And the really great thing is, that people keep coming back to see what else the Digi-Taalhuis offers, they really are hungry for more.



NETHERLANDS



Ērika Pičukāne

Ērika is a methodologist in the Latvian Language Agency (LVA). She teaches Latvian foreign nationals and cooperates with educators who teach languages in schools. In her career, she has been responsible for re-emigration families' camps and teachers' language workshops and has managed various languages and integration projects of the Asylum Seekers Integration Fund. Since 2009, she has been studying for a doctoral degree at the University of Latvia (LU) in Pedagogy, specialising in the area of Adult Pedagogy.



LATVIA

In March 2020, after Latvia announced the state of emergency, my colleagues and I realised that there was no time to wait; we needed to adapt. Remote learning to limit the spread of the virus was the right thing to do, but it was not easy! Neither for educators, or project coordinators, or language learners. The un-understood and un-heard had to be explained repeatedly (and in many cases, the training took place without there being a common language among students and teachers). It was definitely not easy because it was crucial to help people work with different digital skills, and even without them - to learn and overcome their fears, not only from language but now also from the computer. While I was working, I tried my best to support others, so some of my recommendations for adult educators who teach the language remotely too are as follows. First of all, schedule enough time to prepare for online work with students successfully.

**“Be positive in your work!
In your attitude and way of
thinking.”**

Anticipate that extra time will be required. Do not worry. A small delay at the beginning of the class due to explaining mundane instructions will not have a serious effect on long-term learning. Secondly, try to give your lessons all the same structure. It will make it easier for

learners to focus on work, and you won't need to spend time on additional explanations.

Don't forget to get instant feedback, too, with the help of various tools. Then,

if you have several days off on your training course, send a movie fragment, an animation, a song that students have to play as homework. Finally, be positive in your work! In your attitude and way of thinking. Personally, I believe I was lucky because, in my first group which began their course remotely, there were some professional computer specialists, and students from Vietnam, who had really excellent computer skills. I taught the language, but they taught me how to work with different digital tools.



GREECE

Ilias Tanos

Ilias is chief executive officer and program manager of Scientific Association DIGITAL IDEA. He is a certified trainer by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance of Greece (EOPPEP).

I have participated in many adult programs as an adult educator over the past 20 years. I have a lot of experience in digital transition and blended learning opportu-

nities. I represent the Scientific Association DIGITAL IDEA which is a non-profit scientific association, representing higher education graduates and professionals with an established interest in the application and diffusion of new technologies in education,

health, culture, environment, and any other human activity. Its members are professionals in large public and private organisations, university professors, and adult educators. We work in DIGITAL IDEA with Adults: 30+ years old, teachers, trainer's leaders, business mentors, and active people eager to share their knowledge and learn from others.

**“Our ability to adapt to the
Covid-19 situation was also
helped by our experience gained
from our participation in the
Erasmus+ programme.”**

After the COVID-19 pandemic I think everything has changed. Our ability to adapt to the Covid-19 situation was also helped by our experience gained from our participation in the Erasmus+ programme.



SLOVENIA

Mitja Černko

Mitja is the co-founder of the Trainers' Forum (TsF), an international and interdisciplinary community of learning providers. He has started his journey as an adult learning provider started when he was 19, while studying psychology, contributing to various (international) student organisations, and conducting (social) data science project.

As a psychologist and educator, my primary interest is psychological sovereignty - a set of capacities enabling conscious character development, promoting well-being and preventing distress.

Developing capacities for learning and participation in line with the pace of complexification is an essential challenge of our times.

When it comes to the digital transition and blended learning, I am fascinated by the untapped potentials it holds. Digital learning does not need to mirror face-to-face learning. It's enabling entirely new possibilities.

It enables human interaction to unfold (ever more immersively and intimately) unconstrained by space, and at least for one-directional interactions, by time. Imagining opportunities for blended learning, I would start with the promising trend of establishing

“Developing capacities for learning and participation in line with the pace of complexification is an essential challenge of our times.”

one's second brain - a digital and interlinked personal library. Similarly promising is the possibility of personalised AI-driven learning assistants, serving as advisors and curators of our learning journeys, by offering “micro-learning” tailored to our challenges, goals, availability, and preferences.

With *Online Training Festival*, an initiative powered by TsF, we are just starting to scratch the surface.

For example, by developing a (psychometrically validated) instrument to evaluate (perceived) session quality, we have gained a powerful tool to screen and benchmark individual sessions and discovered more about the basic factors contributing to a valuable learning experience.

Zane Balode

Zane has been working at Riga Airport for more than 20 years, and has extensive work experience in airfield operations. For the last 5 years, she has been sharing her experience and knowledge with the Airport employees and cooperation partners by working as an instructor at Riga International Airport Training Centre.

Once upon a time, in the long-ago beginning of 2020, all Riga International Airport Training Centre training activities were held in person. The employees would sit, listen, take note, ask questions, discuss, learn and take tests in paper format - all in a physical classroom. The instructor had face-to-face contact with everyone - sometimes some people needed to be told to keep the noise down, while others needed extra encouragement or help.

“For all our denial and stubbornness, we cannot simply erase the pandemic.”

Then came 12 March 2020. Due to the pandemic declared in the country, in-person training was no longer an option. For all our denial and stubbornness, we cannot simply erase the pandemic. The situation has forced us to learn, change, adapt, think and create exciting remote learning courses, so that employees are not only able to understand

what they have learned but they are also able to put their knowledge into practice when carrying out their direct responsibilities. A wise man once said, “Keep on learning no matter your age! It's great fitness for your brain. As long as you are still learning, you cannot age!”

To draw some conclusions, first of all the employees' wellbeing has to be taken into account. This was both a challenge and an opportunity to appreciate colleagues, as well as

provide and receive support. Secondly, technical equipment (lighting, sound, workplace layout and design) plays a crucial role in the wellbeing of both the instructor and the participants. Finally, the situation facilitated intergenerational cooperation. It applies to life at home as well - children taught their parents and grandparents.



LATVIA

Antoine Amiel

Antoine is an entrepreneur from the French EdTech and the co-founder of Learn Assembly, a company that helps learning and employability optimists grow. He is also a member of the FFP's (Fédération de la Formation Professionnelle – Professional Learning Federation). Antoine is an EPALE Ambassador.

I first studied literature and as I didn't necessarily want to teach, at least not immediately, then I went on to business school. It was there that I discovered the world of digital technology and education. I realised that there is a lot of progress to be made in this field and this gave me the impetus to create my own company, Learn Assembly. Its mission is to develop and facilitate access to learning, to develop the desire to learn, to rethink the way we learn, whether in companies, universities or public administrations. We are working to train undergraduate medical teachers, interns or professors to deliver interactive and lively distance learning courses and to design innovative digital resources. The aim is to improve their pedagogy, their way of teaching using digital technology to avoid the "black screen syndrome" on Zoom.

Training on your own at a distance requires self-discipline, motivation and the ability to use the tools. Unless this is the case, there is a risk of losing interest or of learning only superficially: just because you have seen a video it does not mean you have acquired a skill. Everyone was

"Just because you have seen a video it does not mean you have acquired a skill."

forced to use digital technology in a very improvised way. We discovered that it was possible, but it was suffered by many, which is a pity. I believe there are several lessons to be learned from this: digital technology facilitates access to training and its democratisation, but if training is not designed to maintain social links it

can be a factor that creates isolation. People should not be alone behind their screens. Secondly, we tend to oppose face-to-face training and distance learning, when the best

way is to use a mixture of the two, which works well. Finally, there has been an increase in awareness of the possibility of professional development and retraining. There is a current trend towards digitalising training content to address a range of issues. But just because you have access to content doesn't mean you develop skills. A virtuous model includes a mix of content and practice, social, peer-to-peer learning that promotes experimentation and employability.



FRANCE



SPAIN

María Consuelo Sáiz Manzanares

María Consuelo is a university lecturer at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Burgos. Her areas of research focus on the analysis and improvement of learning processes through the use of technology and artificial intelligence techniques.

The European project *Self-Regulated Learning in SmartArt Erasmus+ Adult Education* is co-funded by the European Commission and led by the University of Burgos. The *SmartArt* project has an interdisciplinary and innovative character and is

focused on the generation of new ways of teaching Art History in adult education through the use of new technologies. Among them, eye tracking software and avatars that regulate the learning of users are used,

"The SmartArt project has an interdisciplinary and innovative character and is focused on the generation of new ways of teaching Art History in adult education through the use of new technologies."

which facilitates the detention of different learning profiles and will facilitate the personalised offer of learning, increasing their motivation. The use of these innovative resources aims to promote the teaching of Art History in virtual learning environments and to foster the dissemination of the value of cultural heritage.

SmartArt aims to design a smart learning environment through a virtual classroom that integrates self-regulated learning tools in which different hypermedia resources (avatars, feedback, learning logs, etc.) and gamification are used.

Dörte Stabl

Dörte has been a freelance adult educator since 2001. She works in Germany with various associations, foundations, social institutions, and education providers. She also sometimes carry out media-based education projects with adolescents. Dörte is an EPALE Ambassador.



One focus of my learning provision is social media and applications such as the blog-publishing and CMS system WordPress. Such fields evolve at a rapid pace. If the participants are lucky, the practical knowledge they acquire in my seminars might be applicable for twelve months, at other times, perhaps only four weeks. Interfaces get a fresh design, new functions appear while others disappear... In this sense, the practical aspects of my seminars (where do I click? where do I find the function?) are of very limited value. Only fundamental content relating to, for example, social media use or digital communication remains valid in the longer term.

“Most of us gain little to no experience of self-guided learning during our years of formal education.”

The short-term practical knowledge often strikes me as a burden I would be better off without. But that would mean the seminars lack certain practical aspects and would fail to fulfil the participants' perfectly reasonable expectations. The only way to ensure that my seminars proved valuable in the long run was to give participants the tools they need to continue learning on their own. The journey to that point was not always straightforward.

Participants have not always welcomed the fact that learning does not end with the seminar if they want to successfully make use of their presence on the web. Our educational biographies are the main reason why autonomous learning is not always received enthusiastically.

Most of us gain little to no experience of self-guided learning during our years of formal education. Our experience of learning centres on the teaching

of fixed content which must be acquired in a certain spatial and temporal environment. The means and methods for learning are prescribed by a central person – the teacher. The competence of autonomous learning contradicts this approach. It involves, for example, independently determining learning goals and content, as well as the way learning, is organised.

In order to promote autonomous learning, I had to start by looking at my teaching experience and habits. I asked myself what I need to do to encourage learning which takes place without me i.e. informally. If I am not there, I cannot explain anything. Rather, I explain less. I purposefully ask questions and let participants explain. I create problems and encourage participants to solve them. In other words, my main task is to provide fewer answers and instead support learning.

I give learners the necessary tools to continue learning. Such tools include carefully selected resources, topic-specific online groups that learners can join, and sometimes also tips on effective online research.

“I create problems and encourage participants to solve them. In other words, my main task is to provide fewer answers and instead support learning.”

I also think carefully about what concepts and connections learners need to know in order to quickly get to grips with changes. There are quite a few of them, and I found it useful to follow the principle of didactic reduction in order to make the right selection.





LITHUANIA

Nerijus Kriauciunas

Nerijus has been designing and facilitating adult training programmes for the last 20 years. These programmes are mostly international and focus on intercultural learning, civic engagement, digital literacies, and professional development. Nerijus works with digital literacy and media literacy, learning-to-learn, intercultural learning, professional development programmes.

About 10 years ago, when researching and studying critical media literacy, I realised that such literacies are vital for our lives and careers. I turned my focus to how media and

technology impact personal and work lives and also societies.

Our organisation started offering international courses for adults on digital technologies, digital competencies and media literacies. For example, we ran a programme *H.O.T.E.L. - How Online Technology Enables Learning*. During this programme, participants tried out and learned about new digital tools and technologies to improve their lives, learning and work. My personal and professional interest in digital technologies led me to discover digital Open Badges. Together with my colleague, we searched for a recognition tool that would be flexible, digital and visual. Digital Open Badges technology has exactly these

properties and much more to offer. With digital Open Badges, I started a new professional role, becoming the lead on *EduTech* developments. Together with partners in 30+ locations across Europe and beyond, our team developed the *Cities of Learning* platform. In the coming decades, micro-learning may become a dominant way of learning for adults. Such learning will require even more flexibility from both learners and organisers. If learning transforms into micro-learning, then the entire credentials system must change.

“In the coming decades, micro-learning may become a dominant way of learning for adults.”

The hierarchical system of awarding credentials - diplomas, certificates - may need to change to adapt to new ways of learning. We can already see the signs of changes, especially the wider adoption of digital credentials, such as digital Open Badges, digital certificates, online portfolios.

Erik Madarász

Erik has worked in the field of vocational education and training and adult education since 1999. He is currently working as the educational director of Soter-Line Oktatási. He is a founding member of KárpátHáló Egyesület and, since 2007, he has been a member of the National Association of Adult Education Experts.

We've all been through a very difficult period. As adult learning trainers, these changes in circumstances have also had an impact on us.

Digital distance education has truly grown in importance and acceptance. Traditional classroom training seems to be on the decline, while the majority of those involved in adult learning choose some form of distance learning.

“It is a fact that digitalisation is here to stay and due to the pandemic, it has suddenly become a hugely significant part of our lives.”

One of the reasons for this is that the shock caused by the virus still has an impact on our life and old habits seem to be outdated and replaced by new ones. We have yet to revert to our regular way of

life and perhaps, things will stay the way they are. However, it is a fact that digitalisation is here to stay and due to the pandemic, it has suddenly become a hugely significant part of our lives.

The grand-scale transformation of adult training has had as much impact on our professional activities as the special operational requirements imposed by the pandemic. As a result of these transformations, the well-known system of the NQR (National Qualifications Register) has been terminated and replaced by a new adult training register separate from the one of VET provided within the school system. We must master new concepts, procedures and methods and organise trainings, and teach and learn amongst the changed circumstances.



HUNGARY

Marlou Meulenberg

Marlou is a Learning & Development consultant at Savant Learning Partners, which is part of Group Moovs, a group of companies that focus, among other things, on educational advice and training in strategic behavioural change.

At Savant, we strongly advocate for the use of digital applications in our educational designs for training and courses where context-appropriate. This ensures the accessibility of the training or course, enables the participant to study independent of time and place, and provides variety in the educational process. Digital applications often imply e-learning. But I believe that it is important to think beyond that. In fact, Group Moovs has a wide range of options that can be deployed, such as microlearning, videos, gamification and VR.

One of the training courses in which I am involved is courier training. Being a courier is about more than just driving a vehicle. There is a need for companies to deploy couriers to train other couriers in customer service, dealing with aggression and driving fuel-efficiently and safely. A courier training programme with these subjects did not exist, so Group Moovs decided to develop its own programme for novice couriers. We decided to develop an app where we work through microle-

“Being a courier is about more than just driving a vehicle.”

arning, which consists of small and manageable learning units (considerably smaller than e-learning). This is a fun and accessible way of teaching material and incorporating various methods (videos, gaming elements). This way, participants can choose when and where to study the material. Furthermore, the utilisation of microlearning increases retention.

I believe it is important to consider the added value of digital learning resources and to see which tool fits best. Many people only think of e-learning, but there is so much more than that. I would also like to emphasise the importance of experimenting with new ways of working and of ensuring variety. This variety ensures that participants (e.g. new couriers) remain interested. Another way of engaging participants is by linking training to practice. In courier training, after each microlearning, participants are encouraged to get hands-on and/or get feedback from their colleagues. This ensures a close relationship between theory and practice.



NETHERLANDS

Donata Savini

Donata is a consultant and teacher of C, C++, Java and C# languages. In recent years, she has been mainly involved in object-oriented programming in higher education, business and schools. She has published books on programming languages, among them *Java, Practical Programming Course*.

Iput into practice the theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability of Feuerstein, which is based on the plasticity and flexibility of each human being, who is able

to change well beyond childhood in a structural way, that is perfected with the creation of new cognitive structures produced sometimes with the help of a mediator, who interposes between him/her and reality, makes him/her learn new strategies, promoting the formation of new mental structures. Studies have shown that

“Knowledge is therefore not intended as a simple storage. It is an individual construction, which is never neutral, but rather full of different meanings, where the teacher is a mediator.”

learning is a complex process, in which, aside from many other variables, student and teacher are involved in a dynamic and active relationship, which brings into play not only broadcast, but also relational and affective content. Knowledge is therefore not intended as a simple storage. It is an individual construction, which is never neutral, but rather full of different meanings, where the teacher is a mediator. In the individual construction for a successful learning, different personalities must be respected, taking into account as much as possible various degrees of sensitivity that may affect the learning mode.



ITALY

Divina Frau-Meigs

Divina is a sociologist and a professor of Media, Information and Communications Technology at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle. She graduated from Sorbonne University, Stanford and the Annenberg School for Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. Divina is an EPALE Ambassador.



FRANCE

I started by taking an interest in culture and language through sociolinguistics: I like to compare and find regional characteristics. It was later that I turned to media studies, with a very broad approach, initially focused on the audience. As the media has evolved, so has my profession. In recent years, a series of applications and platforms have changed the way things are done and have, for example, replaced the notion of the audience with that of communities or echo chambers. Sociology, which was initially interested in mass media, now looks at a highly fragmented object and in individualised uses. It is more complicated to see and follow.

“Today, the issues at stake are first and foremost the risks of misinformation and the quality of information.”

I am a specialist in risky content and behaviour: initially, I focused on media panics, violence, pornography and a little on advertising. Today, the issues at stake are first and foremost the risks of misinformation and the quality of information. These are real democratic risks. I also work on radicalisation and hate speech issues with French and European colleagues. We are also seeing the emergence of the issue of privacy and its management by individuals and states - via the GDPR - but also positive aspects linked to the construction of online influence and the presentation of the self.

As well as a media sociologist, I am also an education specialist, trained at Stanford University. First, I

use the results of my research for active teaching practices. I have greatly contributed to the development of the concept of media and information literacy and have pushed for the evolution of the concept of “information literacy” in relation to the concept of “communication literacy” or info-com.

One issue that is increasingly present is the climate emergency. The digital sector accounts for 4% of pollution in general, and this is not widely known. There is a lot of greenwashing, a whitewashing of the toxicity of digital technology through representations that give the impression that big companies are fighting for the climate cause when in fact they are in a status quo that suits them perfectly. This comes in addition to fake news about the climate and climate change scepticism. But digital technology can be transformed in a positive way to change peoples’ way of thinking and to reduce pollution (less travel, less paper printing, etc.).

I have just handed in the final report of an Erasmus-type project won by my association, Savoir*Devenir, called *YouCheck!* which highlights new media and information needs (funded by DG-Connect). These are largely visual literacy skills. In the digital world, entry is now primarily through images rather than text, and it is necessary to understand the data management mechanisms and algorithms that drive image recommendation. I am trying to build up a repository of skills in this area: understanding how an image is falsified, detecting the filters that falsify it, knowing the different types of image compression, carrying out research into reverse images.





POLAND

Radoslaw Czahajda

Radoslaw is an evidence based trainer, speaker and author, bridging the gap between research and practice. He achieves his mission by writing books and articles, organising webinars, speaking at various different events, training trainers, designing eLearning courses, and experimenting with other trends in learning. Radoslaw is an EPALE Ambassador.

I think what happened when we all got on this roller coaster of live synchronous education was that new fears began to emerge. A fear that wasn't felt when we taught in

our training rooms. The fear of silence, the fear of letting people do things on their own during the session. In 2020-2021 I have organised two large online training events, both with over 150 training sessions in total. Knowing that I like to have everything under control, I decided to attend as many training sessions as possible during those events, so that I had the chance to experience the sessions and not just organise them for others. I realised that most of the sessions, including mine, were very noisy. There was no single trainer that gave the participants a text to read. There was no self-assessment or

self-reflection. There was always someone speaking. Of course this is subjective, as later on I discovered there actually were some amazing trainers that used silence well in their training. They even used the physical spaces of participants or involved participants' friends and relatives in the session, which creates more opportunities that we were used to in our trainings before 2020.

"I realised that a lot of the limitations associated with online training were only in our heads."

The point is, during 2020 I realised that a lot of the limitations associated with online training were only in our heads. Online training can be just as inspiring and interactive as physical training. The problem was - we had to learn it from scratch.

Martin Dobeš

Martin started his career in education 20 years ago. From consumer education, he moved to human resources development and then research, and finally to social inclusion in learning. Martin now works as a consultant for social inclusion in education for the government Agency for Social Inclusion and is also an expert on EPALE.

Most of us feel that the learning world has changed irreversibly over the past two years. There was a lot of panic and confusion, especially in the beginning. But I have always thought that every crisis brings a seed of opportunity and challenge. As a society, we need crises to improve ourselves. In good times we are more static as we are not forced to think about changing things, because whatever we are doing is working well. But during a crisis, we know we have to adapt and innovate in order to survive.

"I have always thought that every crisis brings a seed of opportunity and challenge. As a society, we need crises to improve ourselves."

But it is also true that with rapid change - and we have witnessed a rapid change now - comes some unexpected problems. Change is usually good for some people, while for others it can be a threat. I work in the area of social inclusion. So, when the

pandemic started and we saw a huge rise in online education, I saw it as a great opportunity for the whole learning field, provided we were able to

use it smartly. But I also asked myself, who is at risk? What is the risky part of the transition? Quite quickly we realised that it is not just the access that will determine potential success or failure. It is the competences of people. We are witnessing a new, larger exclusion in participation in learning - the digital exclusion.

Throughout the pandemic, I was worried about the need to tackle this problem. At the Agency for Social Inclusion, I worked with municipalities, schools and NGOs to help them overcome the problem. I organised webinars that would develop people's skills. These people would then help the most vulnerable parents and children to gain more access to the digital world.



CZECH REPUBLIC

Renato Luti

Renato is a retired teacher who continues to teach as a volunteer in adult education in a little town in Tuscany. He organizes and teaches ICT courses and works in a group called *Adulti Ancora A Scuola* (Adult still at school).

February 2020. In Barga, a city in the north of Tuscany, something happened that would have been difficult to imagine. A group of adults - a little more than twenty - were attending a basic ICT course for adults. The instructor was a retired teacher who supported life-long learning. The course was promoted by the adult university Unitre Barga and was held in a secondary school.

“Someone was using their son/daughter or grandchildren’s computer, but saw it as little more than a piece of furniture.”

The course participants were beginners. For many of them it was their first experience using a computer. Some didn’t have the latest generation multimedia devices, instead they only had the old type of mobile phone, the Nokia with the pixel display. Someone was using their son/daughter or grandchildren’s computer, but saw it as little more than a piece of furniture. Their situation was common in many families: young people weren’t interested whether the adults in their homes were able to use computers and smartphones or not. The children were able to provide for any need. The result was that adults were left behind, far behind. Finally they realised this, and seized the chance to enrol on the practical ICT course in order to become independent.

Then, on 5 March 2020 we were told that Covid-19 had arrived, and it was among us. Schools were

closed. Those twenty odd people who had been attending the course found themselves without resources, especially those without a computer, internet, email, or even a smartphone!

The teacher didn’t give up on them and suggested continuing the lessons online, from home. He called the students by phone. The experienced students who had a computer courageously engaged in accessing the web. They started using digital tools that they had never used before, guided by the voice of their teacher over the phone.

AAAS (Adulti Ancora A Scuola), Adults at school once more became important because it wasn’t just a logo but an educational strategy. Video conferences and virtual rooms: explanations, images, exercises, corrections, comments, assessments, marking; requests on different subjects and the need to know even more. A new difficulty emerged: at the beginning, just a few had a reliable internet connection, peripheral regions in Italy are not well served. For this reason the traditional phone call was the means of keeping everyone in contact with each other. It is not easy for beginners to participate in a virtual room but the desire to learn was strong.

In the homes of the adult learners, for women in particular, timings and habits had gradually changed. No one was surprised if mum, aunty or grandma spent hours at the computer. House chores were often postponed until the end of distance learning.

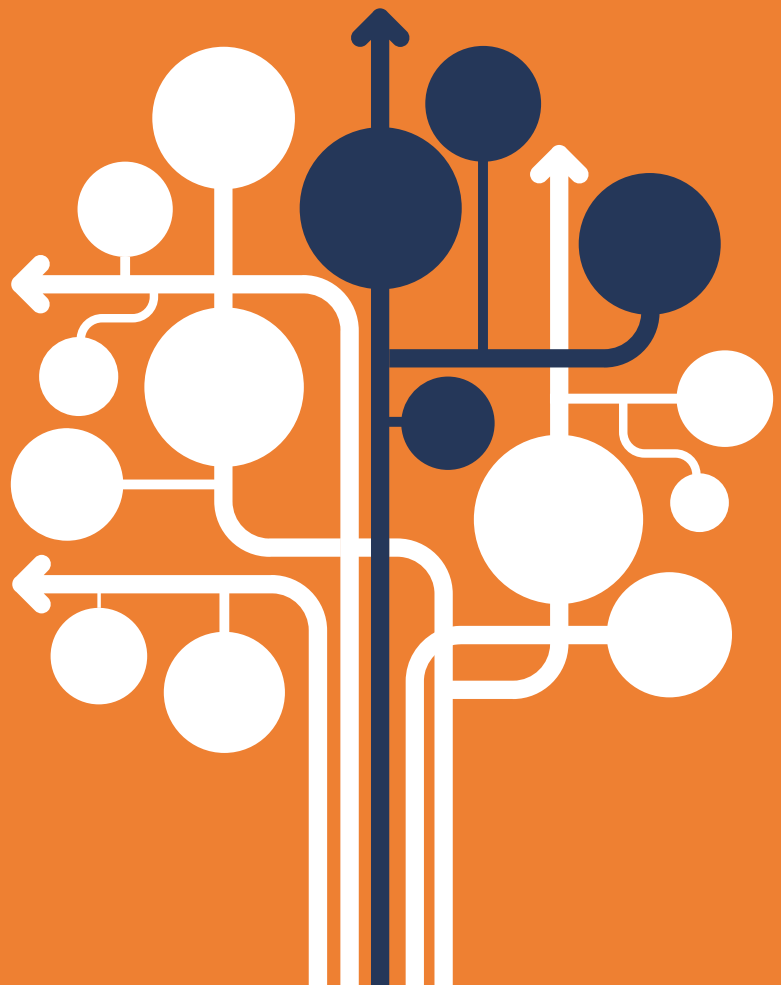


ITALY



3.

Life and work skills
for empowering adults
to learn and participate



Marian Janssen-de Goede

Marian is a Pedagogical Academy graduate who, after spending a few years teaching in primary schools, entered the world of adult education. In 2008 she started her own consultancy company Zet een Pun. Marian is an EPALE Ambassador.



NETHERLANDS

The vast amount of low-literate Dutch speakers, about 90%, can speak Dutch fluently and generally have few problems reading. Writing, maths and digital skills, however, are tricky areas. What they need is targeted support, rather than having to start from scratch.

Take a security guard, for instance, who's doing an excellent job until his new supervisor asks him to write a brief report about what happens each day. He's shocked because he doesn't feel comfortable writing. Other similar examples include entrepreneurs who have to start writing speeches and spouses who suddenly have to take over the family finances. All of a sudden, people can find themselves forced to do something they've never done before. This is when they can find themselves in a difficult situation.

The torrent of digital developments is incessant. Things you used to be able to arrange in person over the counter can now only be done online. It may be more efficient, but it certainly doesn't make it easier for everyone. Two worlds seem to emerge; one moves at lightning speed leading the way while the other, the world of the low literates, is left behind. There is no connection between these two worlds. My goal

was to give low-literate people a face. I wanted to show how varied and diverse this group is. With *KLASSE!* recruitment method, I used my experience as a teacher and showed how to connect with the target demographic in an accessible way. Equality is key.

“KLASSE! is successful because it embraces the philosophy that everyone can grow and has value.”

To help correct the distorted view of low-literate people, I developed four profiles: Fatima, Wesley, Gerard and Elly. These personas give a face to low-literate people. Each profile has various, recognisable traits, including personal characteristics such as family situation, work, interests, everyday activities and social circle, but also motivations.

Once you've identified their motivations, you can start developing courses that people actually find appealing, courses that are not specifically geared towards language or maths skills. I call them camouflage courses. Ultimately, what matters is that you appeal to the interests of the adults you're targeting.

KLASSE! is successful because it embraces the philosophy that everyone can grow and has value. From the cleaning lady at a nursing home to the president of the local football club to pensioners. Everyone matters and we all need a helping hand every now and again. In this regard, literacy is irrelevant.

I want to correct the distorted view of “low-literates” and spread a positive message at the same time. Together, we have to stop labelling people and marginalising low-literate members of society. People with low literacy play a vital role in the very foundations of our society and must be cherished. Supporting them to grow and develop is the greatest goal of all.

KLASSE! Maak kennis met...

FATIMA
"Ik wil mijn kinderen voorlezen"
www.ikwildatleren.nl

KLASSE! Maak kennis met...

WESLEY
"Ik wil voor mijn werk een certificaat of diploma halen"
www.ikwildatleren.nl

KLASSE! Maak kennis met...

GERARD
"Ik wil meer betekenen voor mijn vereniging"
www.ikwildatleren.nl

KLASSE! Maak kennis met...

ELLY
"Ik wil een baan in de zorg zodat ik met anderen kan werken"
www.ikwildatleren.nl

Ivo Poot

Ivo has been working for seven years as the manager of a large branch of Opnieuw & Co, a thrift shop in Rotterdam. Before this, he worked in several retail companies, specialising in shoes and clothing.

As a thrift shop, we work with people who sign up as volunteers, or people who come in to improve their knowledge of certain functions. This can be for example as a co-driver, cashier or in the catering industry. These people often come in through the municipality and then start a three-year trajectory that is continuously developed.

“What I like about working in the shop is that you really offer people a home and warmth; you see people really flourish. People are very involved in the shop and you build something together.”

Step by step, skills are developed both personally (helping with finances and grants) and professionally (development path, CV writing). In the end, they are also supported by a job coach who helps them look for work. In this way, people can develop and grow further.

The people involved are from different walks of life and from different backgrounds, which also creates a lot of energy. For example, a woman who started with us in catering, moved from the small-scale catering business in the thrift shop to a reasonably large catering chain. Or a Syrian man whose Dutch language is coming on leaps and bounds, and who can pick up more and more things by himself. What I like about working in the shop is that

you really offer people a home and warmth; you see people really flourish. People are very involved in the shop and you build something together.

The *Language buddies* project started when I was working on an assignment with a student about language use in the workplace. She researched how companies employ people who do not speak the language or who speak it poorly, and how this impairs their performance. I helped her with a number of interviews and by giving examples of the case, for example about the Syrian refugees who work with us. After completing the research, the municipality heard that I had worked on this. They had declared 2021 the year of the language, with the aim of encouraging low-literates to develop their language skills.

There are 90,000 people in the municipality who do not speak the language well. We then offered to act as language buddies. We now have a number of language buddies in the shop who act as points of contact and who can refer people to certain language courses. They have shirts with seven phrases on the back saying “do you speak Dutch?”, “do you speak English?” and so on in all kinds of languages (Polish, Spanish and Arabic etc.). These people can discuss what the municipality of Rotterdam offers to help people develop themselves in the Dutch language. Through all the initiatives of the municipality, 20,000 people have already signed up for a language course.



NETHERLANDS



Miranda Dahlhaus

Miranda is a copywriter and journalist by profession. She has a language and theatre shop in Breda. The team is made up of 30 creative people and sustainable and innovative businesses.



NETHERLANDS

I believe in a way of learning that connects with creativity. After all, learning can be so much fun.

The language panel came about as a result of the municipality of Breda's approach to low literacy. It is a group of (-ex)low-literate people, both NT1 and NT2, who have difficulty reading and writing. They are language ambassadors for a larger group of people who do not dare to admit that they are illiterate.

“In this series, we put the language ambassadors in a position of power by emphasising their the ambassadors' strengths and what they can do better by improving their language skills.”

What makes the language panel approach so powerful is that the client and the language ambassadors have a lot of direct contact with each other. The ambassadors' stories can really touch people and thus have an impact. By creating trust, the holistic approach where everybody is involved and there is a good network, is a great success. Because of the diversity of the ambassadors, it is also easy for people to identify with an ambassador.

At the moment we are working on a project to reduce the shame around low literacy. We are making a TV series for BredaNu in which one of the language ambassadors is the central figure. The fact that the language ambassadors are working on this has really been achieved through trust. In this series, we put the language ambassadors in a position of power, not by emphasising low literacy, but by emphasising their strengths and what they can do better by improving their language skills.

This project has also been expanded to include a poster campaign, interviews with the local newspaper and an event in the local community centre, which the language ambassador himself is allowed to organise.

If you would like to set up a language panel yourself you do not underestimate the work involved. You really need to take the time to gather a good group of ambassadors and involve them in the process. For this, having a good network and earning trust is crucial. Maintaining the language panel is important, but commitment can sometimes be difficult. Sometimes the ambassadors experience hardship or other problems and then you'll need to turn to your network for another partner who can help them further.



Mariadaniela Sfarra

Mariadaniela teaches Humanities on the Level II Course for adults at ITS Aterno-Manthonè in Pescara. She coordinates training projects and language workshops for native and non-native students. She has been a teaching fellow at the Faculty of Sciences Education at the University in L'Aquila where her specialty is school dispersion. Furthermore, she is a Tutor Coordinator and Consultant for School Improvement. Mariadaniela is an EPALE Ambassador.



ITALY

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, students at my school have had to make a significant change: from attending the majority of classes in person, they have had to adapt to distance learning. To mitigate any adverse effect on the linguistic abilities of adult students who had just returned to the educational system, and to avoid the risk of fragmentation in their social life, I coordinated two linguistic projects based on creative writing.

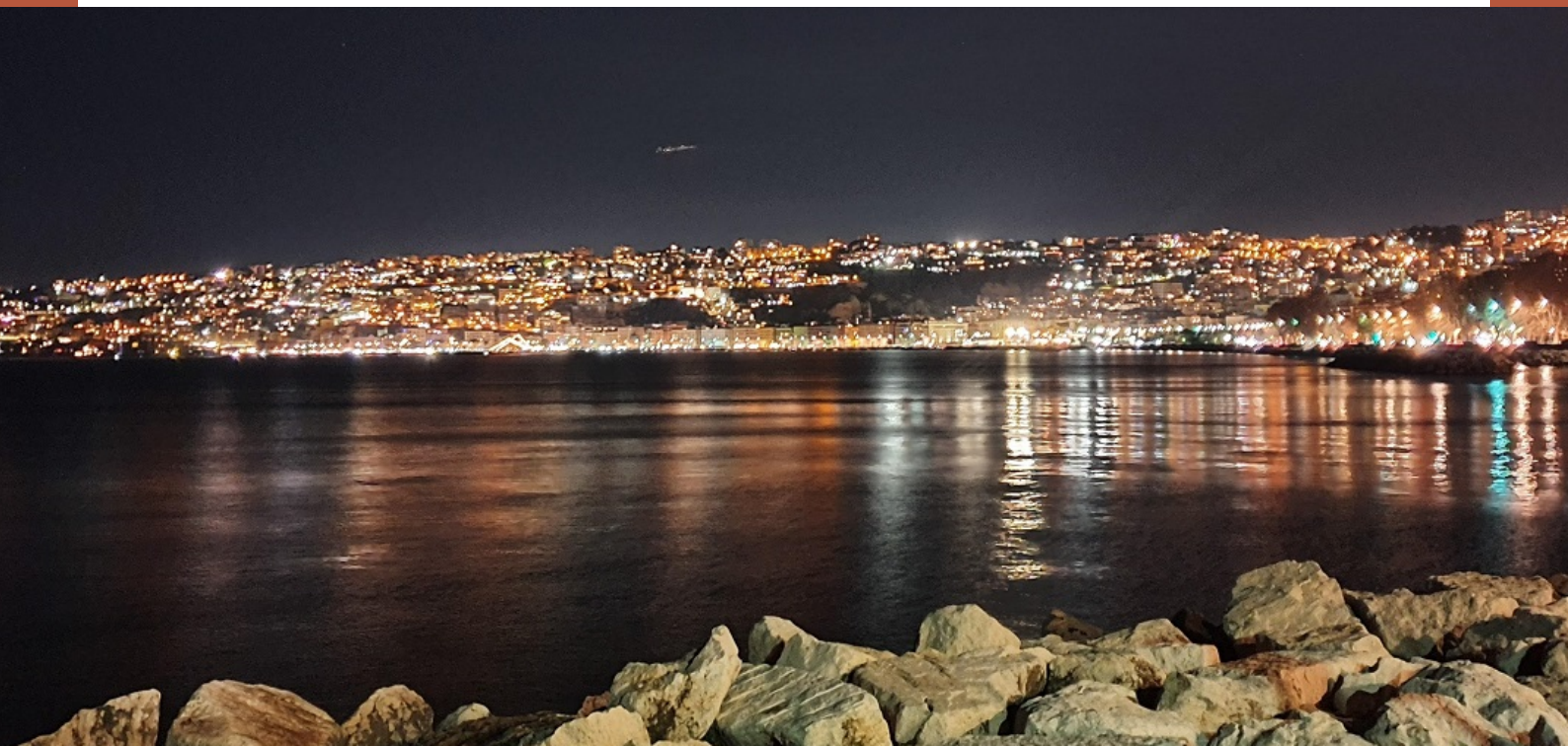
In the first one, the students, after an in-depth study on Boccaccio's *Decameron*, were asked to write their own short stories. Like the narrators in the *Decameron*, who had moved away from their plague-infested city, they had to imagine an ideal space for escaping reality and meeting as a class-group. We were able to collect all the short stories and decided to publish them under the title *The Thousand and One Evenings*, as multimedia eBook. The work crossed different voices and styles. Authors were encouraged to express their own personality and share it with potential readers through online publication. The book was a success: stories were read and shared

on social networks. Students were enthusiastic because they felt they had overcome a challenge, both personally and as a group.

“Like the narrators in the *Decameron*, who had moved away from their plague-infested city, they had to imagine an ideal space for escaping reality and meeting as a class-group.”

Another learning project, which I coordinated during the distance learning phase, featured a student from the fourth year, who wrote *Rumrì*, a work of self-narration and creative writing. Using the autobiographical method, the student gave voice to her own experiences through her original story of feelings and hopes. The title *Rumrì* means woman in the Romani language. This work focuses on femininity and the author's world.

Self-narration was thus a vehicle for expressing a desire for redemption and the search for meaning. The inner monologue is the narrative technique used for the expression of one's personality; a technique that alternates with forms of dialogue, imagined or told, with external characters that enrich the message. Also this publication was positively received by readers.



Puk Witte

Puk works for Sardes, a research & consultancy agency. She has served as the project lead for the *Innovative Deployment of Experts by Experience in Low-Literacy in Municipalities* project for the ABC Foundation since 2019. ABC is a volunteer organisation run by, and for, (former) low-literates. ABC promotes the interests of, provides information to and organises meetings between language ambassadors.



NETHERLANDS

In recent years, the demand for experts by experience in low-literacy (or language ambassadors) has grown considerably and organisations of many different shapes and sizes are putting them to use. In order to meet the growing demand for these language ambassadors while also responding to the new decentralised approach

“Experts by experience are invaluable for recruiting participants for courses, raising awareness about low-literacy among professionals, and helping to assess communications and their comprehensibility.”

to education, the ABC Foundation launched its project on *Innovative Deployment of Experts by Experience in Low-Literacy in Municipalities*. With this

project, it strives to build a local and sustainable network of low-literacy experts by experience in fourteen places across the country, mostly with municipalities.

Experts by experience are invaluable for recruiting participants for courses, raising awareness about low-literacy among professionals, and helping to assess communications and their comprehensibility for the target audience, as well as for making policy.

We therefore hope that more municipalities and organisations will set up a network of low-literacy experts.

Bart Siekman

After studying Dutch as a Second Language in Amsterdam, Bart now works in the department of adult education at the Institute of Research into Language and Language Teaching Amsterdam (ITTA).

At ITTA, one of our main beliefs is that people need to be motivated in order to learn successfully. Basic skills like reading, writing, mathematics and digital skills will only be useful when people can use them in their

lives and/or work. This vision is present in our training teacher Dutch as a first language (NT1) in which we teach people with a pedagogical background how to teach Dutch adults their mother language. One of the main questions in this training is how teachers can motivate their students to apply the skills they learn in the lessons, in their own living, learning, or working environment. This is not an easy task, because no adult is the same. While one student wants to learn how he/she can read his/her prescriptions, another student may need to learn how to give a good presentation for work/studies.

While some students already have quite good reading skills and only need more training in order to understand study texts for example, other students may need to acquire basic technical reading skills. Another aspect of my work involves helping parents to support their children in learning. The sooner important skills for life are taught, the more children will benefit from them. It is inspiring to see what professionals in child-care and parents can learn from each other when it comes to the development of children. With the experience of the projects described above,

“What really matters is how and why we learn, regardless of what the learning point actually is.”

I began to realize that what really matters is how and why we learn, regardless of what the learning point actually is. This is inspiring and will motivate me to explore the field of adult education more!



NETHERLANDS

Jan Hennes

Jan works in television, producing TV programmes at the production company De Chinezen, which is specialised in socially engaged television. The programme *De Kemping* provided the chance to set up a non-profit organisation with the same name, which aims to help long-term jobseekers to gain experience and get them back to work. This made Jan a social entrepreneur and social worker.



BELGIUM

De *Kemping* is a reality TV programme. It was set during the summer of 2020. Nine young adults who had trouble finding work step onto a meadow somewhere in the Kempen region. For the next two months, they built and ran a campsite, led by creative leader and youth coach Tijs Vanneste. For two months they defied heat waves, rainstorms and COVID-19.

“The whole project was about more than making a documentary, it was not voyeuristic and not scripted.”

They cleaned the showers and toilets, ran the camping cafe, and organised bingo competitions. And they learned to cooperate with each other and take on responsibility, in order to improve their opportunities within the labour market. After all, there is a lot of work to be done on a campsite and a lot to learn. The young adults were given responsibility for the campsite itself and decided everything together with Tijs as their motivating force and mentor. During the project, the young people worked together and they delegated the work by mutual agreement. They took on responsibility themselves and could thus build up work experience.

To make the project realistic, we set up an association for it. This was the only way to give the programme a real foundation. Through the non-profit association, we were able to provide the participants with proper guidance and also pay them a salary. We did not want to use people or employ them to work on the TV programme for free, as so often

happens. We paid the main characters of the programme for 7 weeks providing them with full guidance, with the aim of finding them work. To date, almost all of them have succeeded, even before the programme was aired. We also hired someone from the crew for our production company. Our entire approach as a TV production company is unique. The whole project was about more than making a documentary, it was not voyeuristic and not scripted. We simply filmed what we saw. It is a real campsite, with real guidance. There was always a psychologist present and two more coaches available on site. In the programme you can also see what the experience of working on the campsite meant to the participants.

The young adults featured in the programme had difficulty finding work or keeping it for a variety of reasons. Often, the cause was the “baggage” they carried from their past, a family or addiction problem. We could not solve all of these problems. The main objective was to give them a fresh start, at least professionally. Their professional experience is often a string of small and short contracts. Typically, they have never been able to show their strengths. They entered the project with many doubts about themselves and their abilities.

“Working together on the project, starting from scratch, gave the participants the drive they needed and has allowed them to find their strengths.”

We offered them a place where they could showcase their talents. They found peace of mind or something tangible for themselves. This improved their self-confidence and the conviction that they have a talent. Working together on the project, starting from scratch, gave the participants the drive they needed and has allowed them to find their strengths. Apart from a first aid course, they did not receive any specific training or courses. The most important lessons they have learned are: how to work in a team with others, how to take initiative and how to hold down a job. Coming to work every day was the first important goal.





POLAND

Lilia Potonia

Lilia is an art therapist, Gestalt psychotherapist, trainer who runs creativity and handicraft workshops, and an enthusiast of Slavic culture, and Slavic motanka dolls in particular. She is the founder and president of the TERRAZ SENIORAS Association.

In 2010, I started working with older people. For almost 10 years, I have run the *Mydło i Powidło (A Bit of Everything)* older persons' cabaret in Lublin. Neurographica or neurographic art has been

my new professional and personal fascination.

Neurographica is a visual method of working with the subconsciousness. It is an effective way to bring about positive change in your life. It allows you to change existing patterns, build new ones and open yourself up to new opportunities while setting off on your quest. Neurographica is a way of managing your life through drawing. The profession I love allows me to meet people and discover their beautiful worlds. During such encounters, I carry out my mission to offer support by motivating and inciting courage and satisfaction from discovering an artist in yourself. We are all the artists of our own lives. For many of us, the pandemic was a time of transformation and exploration. In my

professional life, it has been, and continues to be, a time of growth and taking on new challenges. At first, I was apprehensive and skeptical about the closure of various institutions and the move to online working: this was neither easy nor natural for me. Another problem related to raising awareness of the accessibility of online services. Forced to work remotely, I clearly saw the inequalities and exclusion of older persons and people living in small towns. I had to overcome my own limitations and fears.

“Neurographica is a visual method of working with the subconsciousness. It is an effective way to bring about positive change in your life.”

I had to master and implement new tools. I have transformed the limitations that previously hindered my personal development into ideas that led to a positive outcome. I plan to further develop and offer online training, workshops, and sessions. In my professional work I am guided by the saying: “Every cloud has a silver lining”.

Anastasia Liopetríti

Anastasia is a senior EU project manager at the Center for Social Innovation - CSI Cyprus. With a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in Gender Studies, she is one of the Youth Ambassadors of the Cyprus Youth Council and she is active in fields relating to youth, gender equality, LGBTQ+ equality, education, climate change, and culture.

In the context of my role as a senior EU Project Manager at CSI Cyprus, I am honoured to be managing the innovative project *Pro-Women - Up-skilling Itineraries for Women as New Cultural Promoters to Enhance Territorial Heritage*. The *Pro-Women* project seeks to promote equal opportunities and social-labour inclusion of low-skilled and

themselves empowered with skills and experience to become cultural promoters of their local culture and heritage, to participate in community activities and to boost their employability skills in the tourism sector.

“These women will become themselves empowered with skills and experience to become cultural promoters of their local culture and heritage.”

unemployed women by providing intervention tools for training and empowerment. The female participants undertake a participative learning path to strengthen their competences and acquire new ones. At the end of the course, these women will become

With COVID-19 changing the route of the Tourism Industry, we are called to recreate better, more sustainable tourism solutions that will benefit both the local community and vulnerable individuals. Various reports show that women are at the centre of this transition. It is therefore our duty to empower them, to equip them with life and work skills necessary to become active agents of change and to gain access to the Tourism labour market.



CYPRUS

Joe Houghton

Joe is an assistant professor at the UCD Smurfit Graduate School of Business in Dublin Ireland, and he also teaches photography through his company Houghton Photography. A UDL facilitator, he is a 2021-24 faculty partner at UCD, helping roll out UDL to the staff in the university. Joe is an EPALE Ambassador.



IRELAND

What would you do with 4 months off your normal education duties to focus on whatever you wanted? Here I reflect on the opportunities, challenges and outcomes which have resulted from just such an opportunity. I've had the privilege of a semester off all teaching duties – my first in over 15 years of teaching at university. I was afforded this wonderful opportunity as a result of being awarded a Fellowship from the UCD Innovation Academy, where I completed a Professional Postgraduate Diploma in Creativity & Innovation for Education last year.

“I even ordered a mug with my *Plus One* project graphic on it to use on the podcast – strange how holding it in my hand made the whole project seem more concrete when it arrived!”

What's the old Chinese curse – *be careful what you wish for?* Approaching the end of the autumn semester, I found myself suddenly facing into a summer with no students. No thesis supervision. No teaching or grading. Heaven, right? Well yes, but then I started thinking – I better have something to show for this by the end of the summer, so what on earth am I going to do? Amazing how a complete lack of constraints can be almost paralyzing – too much choice can be a real issue! An item which had been on my “want to do sometime” list

for years was a podcast. So that kicked me into action. A few more days reading articles, watching YouTube videos, checking out different podcast hosting platforms and I eventually just picked one and signed up – I always find that committing to spend a bit of my own money makes things “real” and gets me far more focussed. I'd completed the Universal Design for Learning Digital Badge in 2020 and at the time been very impressed with the +1 concept of just making 1 small change in your teaching. So, I decided that my topic would be *Plus One – educators inspiring educators*. I worked up some graphics and registered a

web domain for this at www.plusoneteaching.com – again – making it “real” to force myself to commit. A few hours work in WordPress and the website was up. I even ordered a mug with my *Plus One* project graphic on it to use on the podcast – strange how holding it in my hand made the whole project seem more concrete when it arrived!

There is just so much talent, inspiration and energy out there, which I've been so privileged to tap into and hear about. The educators range across disciplines, institutions and continents. I've talked with teachers, professors, policy-makers, and each have fascinating insights, ideas and have left me buzzing.



DENMARK

Diana Medrea-Mogensen

Diana is the founder of We Are Entrepreneurs, an initiative that supports job market integration through entrepreneurship.

I am a partner in two great projects at the moment that focus on Life and Work Skills. *WISE: Women: Innovative, Successful, Empowered* supports women in arts and crafts in acquiring and developing skills in

digital literacy, innovation, and manufacturing solution, and collaborative practices.

FLIGHT: Financial Literacy for Investment, Growth, Help, and Teamwork teaches expatriate women in partners countries basics of financial liter-

acy and investment practices, all while creating a supportive community for sharing best practices. It is incredibly satisfying to help women feel competent and powerful, and one of my favorite aspects of these projects is the communities that are formed around them and how supportive they are.

In a world where access to information, education, training is evermore available and where we as trainers strive to provide the best material and training for our groups, our job is just one aspect of our groups' success.

“It is incredibly satisfying to help women feel competent and powerful, and one of my favorite aspects of these projects is the communities that are formed around them and how supportive they are.”

Agata Warywoda

Agata is a coach and a librarian. She works in the Krosno Public Library, at the Centre for Personal Development and Psychotherapy of the University of Rzeszów and in the LABiB Association. She prepares and conducts various educational activities, workshops, workshop series and projects. Each of the activities Agata undertakes involves guiding participants through a process of change.

My journey of teaching others began in a library. It was there that I conducted my first workshop for children and young people, and later

for adults. Straight away, I knew that passing on knowledge and skills was something that brought me great satisfaction. Above all, I had the feeling that what I was doing was needed by the people I was working with. Many participants came back not only for further training, but also to give me feedback about changes that had taken place in their lives as a result of our meetings. Nowadays I mostly work with adults. I conduct training in two areas: digital competences and soft skills. One of the topics I am very interested in and keenly explore is empathic communication. The training that I remember most was one that focused on turning dreams into

goals and on achieving them. These are very important life skills with which we can consciously manage our development. The training was offered to women living in Oświęcim, a town in the south of Poland. During that training, I made a contribution to unfulfilled dreams. About a year later, one of the participants wrote to me to tell me that she had attended the training and was now saying hello from Nepal. It was one of her dreams, which

“Many participants came back not only for further training, but also to give me feedback about changes that had taken place in their lives as a result of our meetings.”

she turned into a goal and succeeded in achieving. Thanks to this story, every time I have a moment of doubt as to whether what I am doing makes sense, whether adult education is having any real impact, whether change is really happening, I recall this very workshop.



POLAND

Ana Kaučič

Ana is a teacher of English and History. She has successfully worked in the adult education field for the past five years at Ljudska univerza Ormož.

As an English teacher, education organiser, counsellor, and project coordinator I have learned about the demands and needs of adults when acquiring new knowledge. Through my experience of learning on the job, I feel like I have internalised the term “life-long learning”. In 2021, we hosted two partner organisations for

“Through my experience of learning on the job, I feel like I have internalised the term “life-long learning.”

job shadowing. Their goal was to learn how we work with adult participants, teaching methods and course organisation, promotion of our programs and cooperation with local organisations. Three teachers from CEPA Entrevías Madrid vis-

ited for a job shadowing mobility initiative via their project *Opening through ICTs*. Their main aim was to learn about various teaching methods which use ICT with adult participants. They have met

our older participants who are actively learning English, they learned how we work with them, the programs we offer and how we finance them. The members of our project partner Centrum Kształcenia Ustawicznego im. W. Korfanteo from Bytom, Poland visited us through their project *Senior in the centre of the educational impact*. The eight members of the group were interested in the University of Third Age (UTA), the programs and activities for our older persons offered by the UTA, and activities for this specific group of learners in our town.



SLOVENIA

Małgorzata Czernecka

Małgorzata is business psychologist, coach, manager. Specialist in leaders and employee's energy management, mental resilience and mental health, she is the founder of Human Power. Małgorzata creates and support the implementation of long-term wellbeing strategies aimed at optimizing work style and increasing productivity in large companies. She is co-author of the Learning Battle Cards Method, and a book author.



POLAND

For many years I struggled to answer questions that came to me as a manager and psychologist dealing with fatigue, lack of energy and wellbeing every day. Why are people so tired and stressed out at work? How do they sabotage their productivity and efficiency? Do they work in accordance with their own biological capabilities? Is it possible to make them work in a smarter, rather than harder, way? I started the Human Power company in 2014 to answer such questions and to help organisations define key mechanisms for increasing personal daily effectiveness on the physical, emotional and mental level and implement small changes to have high levels of vital

“Why are people so tired and stressed out at work? How do they sabotage their productivity and efficiency?”

energy and inner wellbeing. Most of our services took the form of in-class training. In 2019 we had quite a stable position, and then March 2020 happened. Many traditional

training companies tried to deliver the same services, just online, in order to survive the hard times. But I knew that this was not the right way. So, we abandoned the short and easy path of temporary adap-

tation and we decided to start on a new long-term strategy: designing new products from scratch to deliver new digital programmes, rich with well-selected and composed sets of learning methods to our customers. With such an approach the lockdown became a strong driving force to build more digital products.



ITALY

Lucia Ielpo

Lucia is a secondary school teacher in the south of Italy. Since her home institution is also specialised in adult learning, she has the chance to work in both areas. Besides teaching Italian as a second language (courses are open to everyone), Lucia also teaches English to adults who are struggling to get a certificate that could help them with new job opportunities.

My project is primarily based on the idea that social inclusion is crucial when it comes to education. Therefore, my teaching approach aims to strengthen key competences that could

bridge the gap between training and professional fields. Moreover, my approach is strongly influenced by the multiple intelligences tenets, according to which each person has to be “seen” in relation to his/her peculiar gift that can be enhanced and transformed into a contribution to society. Therefore, my work has a holistic inspiration, so that everyone can find his/her own voice.

To date, I've been working on a CLIL project for adults, which is deeply interdisciplinary in its ambition. Architecture is connected with creative writing

“My work has a holistic inspiration, so that everyone can find his/her own voice.”

(learners are encouraged to write a poem inspired by architectural masterpieces), with experiential learning (each masterpiece is associated and introduced with music, etc.), and spiritual practice (architectural works, for instance, Tadao Ando's Buddha temple, help learners connect with their inner self through a sort of silent meditation where ideas

and body connection, sprout out spontaneously, by means of the artistic input).

Learning becomes a place where everyone can feel a sense of belonging as his/her

own form of understanding and intelligence has been provided so that they can participate and be active.

Social inclusion is about creating a community of learners that can foster their soft skills and competences, such as citizenship, cultural awareness, and so on, by working not only on their individual personality but also on their collective self.



BELGIUM

Guy Swaegers

Guy has a long history as an entrepreneur with a steel workshop. The studio, Moker, was born from an artistic project in the 1980s and it made large artistic constructions. He left the company in 2004 and set up a construction workshop for part-time students and as a work experience place, which became the Kopspeel studio.

Kopspeel, now together with the Gatam Cultuurfabriek in Antwerp, is a construction workshop for the cultural sector. We make sets, stands, stages, exhibition panels... In 2004, as

a non-profit organisation, we were given a place in the Part-time Education Centre in Borgerhout and were able to set up a large studio there in one of the old workshops. We work with pupils and staff – often with refugees – who, with a special employment status, are able to rejoin the regular employment circuit. In the Kopspeel workshops, we work according to the principles of *learning by craftsmanship*. The participants work together with coaches and professionals on projects that are immediately useful to the outside world. At Kopspeel, a participant works from day one on a component that at the end of the process can be found in a theater, a museum, a cultural centre or an artistic production. To date, our youngsters have made numerous constructions, decors, stands, exhibition walls and revolving stages or even been part of complete renovations in the cultural world. From large projects to small repairs.

Participants first gain the necessary self-confidence in the safe environment of the Kopspeel workshop, and the outlines set out by the coach. This basic confidence can grow further if they can stand their ground outside our house as well. The participants not only get to know special and cultural locations, but also the people who work there, the technicians, the production managers.

“One of the important skills that participants can acquire with us is dealing with many different people: customers, designers, clients, other technicians and subcontractors.”

And vice versa, these people learn how to approach learners in order to get them to fit into their own work culture. One of the important skills that participants can acquire with us is dealing with many different people: customers, designers, clients, other technicians and subcontractors. This is often overlooked, but it is a key factor. They have to be able to connect with the team, understand their colleagues, work together in a team. This is often an additional handicap for people from diverse cultural backgrounds. We also encourage them to take the initiative, to show motivation, not to hide.

Mateusz Konieczny

Mateusz is a sociologist, coach, career counselor, certified FRIS® Trainer, and Youth Wiki expert. Mentor in adult and youth development programmes, he graduated from the University of Warsaw, SWPS University and Freie Universität in Berlin.

Last year, I turned 30 and I took up the 30 challenges for my 30th birthday (#30in30). Some of these, including going 30 days without mentioning social media and getting into CrossFit, required stepping out of my comfort zone

“Last year, I turned 30 and I took up the 30 challenges for my 30th birthday (#30in30).”

and others had to be modified due to the social situation at the time. When making the list of challenges I wanted to gain new experiences, meet new people, and gain new knowledge about the world

and myself. It was important for me to stimulate others to be active so that they and their communities could benefit from such activity.

Talking about challenges and change, Kurt Lewin's change management model comes to my mind. In this model, two opposing factors - one that enhances and the other that inhibits action - influence the change being made. To me, one of the inhibiting factors was the pandemic, which prevented me from carrying out the activities I had previously planned, but it also posed new - digital and educational - challenges.



POLAND

Sandra Zoomers

Sandra is a trainer in adult education at the Breakthrough Foundation. For many years, she has supported learners with special needs, working in collaboration with a wide range of organisations and institutions in the Netherlands, Europe, and globally.

One of the biggest challenges of my work as an adult educator is that the quality of non-formal learning needs to be better acknowledged and recognised. Luckily I believe that we are on our way to achieving that. I believe that everyone continuously learns in every situation. I often work with adults who tell me they didn't enjoy their formal education years and therefore now associate learning with something that isn't fun.

"I often work with adults who tell me they didn't enjoy their formal education years and therefore now associate learning with something that isn't fun."

It is important to me that people learn to reflect and are able to express in words what they have learned. Responding to what an individual is interested in or passionate about helps with learning (again). Our newest project *Digital*

technology for pathways to entrepreneurial skills is based on competencies, qualification and endorsement frameworks. Partners connect existing entrepreneurial adult education programmes for disadvantaged adults with fewer opportunities. They use entrepreneurial frameworks

to recognise, endorse, and acknowledge prior learning on the job, and learning in educational programmes.

Citizens with entrepreneurial skills and attitudes are needed

more than ever to rebuild the economy impacted by COVID-19. Future challenges in the field of education include addressing the different ways we assess upskilling and reskilling. It will be crucial to research, map and adapt these different ways of recognising the skills and competencies that both learners and society contribute to each other's wellbeing.



NETHERLANDS

Eleni Zenonos

Eleni is a project manager at the Center For Social Innovation (CSI) in Cyprus, working on EU funded projects, most of them involving adult education. She has a BA in Psychology, an MSc in Research Methods in Psychology, a qualification in Occupational Psychology, a PRINCE2 diploma, qualifications in psychometric testing and a CELTA. She is also an English language teacher, a translator and amateur blogger writing mainly about mental health.

One of the projects I manage as part of my role at the Center for Social Innovation - Cyprus is the Erasmus+ project *Professional English Skills For Employability*

and worldwide and employers across the world demand proficiency in English at all levels: speaking, writing, reading, and listening, as well as for formal and informal communication. Unfortunately, professional English courses are usually only available for middle and upper management personnel, financially healthy companies or for specific occupations.

"One of the ways to reduce unemployment rates is by upskilling adults for work purposes, improving their existing knowledge and skills and acquiring new skills."

Across EU (PESE). This project is of particular importance as unemployment in the EU remains a serious issue, especially during the current pandemic, which has had an adverse effect on unemployment globally.

One of the ways to reduce unemployment rates is by upskilling adults for work purposes, improving their existing knowledge and skills and acquiring new skills. And this is what the *PESE* project is all about! English language skills are essential for every industry sector and level of employment in the EU

Therefore, the unemployed do not have access to such education despite the fact that it could significantly improve their career prospects. *PESE* seeks to address this issue with its high-quality professional English training made available specifically for unemployed citizens across Europe.



CYPRUS

Silvie Moors

Silvie works for the socio-cultural movement, Bond Zonder Naam (BZN), which works to connect people and build a more welcoming and friendly world, first and foremost for, as well as with, people living in poverty, loneliness and imprisonment. Before working at BZN, she worked in the literary world at various reading promotion organisations. Silvie was also the founder, in 2022, of the non-profit organisation DE DAGEN (The Days), which ran for 13 years, with the aim to propagate the connecting and inspiring power of literature.



BELGIUM

Shared Reading is a very simple idea. It does what it says on the tin: it is about sharing what you read. It is not a book club or reading club. We come together with a dozen people for an hour, the moderator reads 2 to 3 texts and guides the conversation about these texts.

In 2011, a psychologist friend gave me the opportunity to do some experimenting in their outpatient department of a psychiatric hospital. Psychiatry was still completely unknown to me at the time, but it appealed to me. I was curious. I ended up in an ugly concrete building with warm, special and vulnerable people. Together with musicians and actors I read, philosophised and sang. What I learned was that literature comforts, allows you to relate and encourages reflection. At about the same time, I was able to attend a three-day training course run by The Reader Organisation, the British organisation that shares literature with vulnerable groups throughout the United Kingdom, in the field of psychiatry, in prisons, and with the poor. It was a training course to become a Shared Reading Practitioner. It was an eye-opening experience for me. It was such a simple idea... Especially because of the lack of barriers to entry. You don't have to do anything beforehand. No need to read a book like in a reading club. You don't even have to be able to read, because someone will read for you.

With my experience and expertise in the hospital, combined with what I learned through The Reader Organisation, I started a *Samen Lezen* (Shared Reading) group in an Antwerp cultural community centre in the autumn of 2012. From the very beginning, we worked together with an association for empowerment of people living in poverty, to encourage people to come join us. The participants also received a cup of soup. After the reading, the soup offers space

for one-to-one conversations and gives the moderator the opportunity to check how everyone is doing. In principle, there is no fixed group for the open initiatives, nor is there any registration, but a group of regular participants is formed with a nice mix of people with different backgrounds and (reading) experiences.

In a very simple way, you can bring people of all walks of life together around literature. There is no need to compromise on the quality of the texts. They are read aloud so you can just come and enjoy. It is not like reading at school, which sometimes makes you lose interest

in reading. In addition, talking about the text together has real positive effects. You share how you feel about a text, what you think about it, what it evokes for you.

The first meeting started with 5 participants. But it grew and grew and soon there were three parallel groups. Around thirty people at the same time were reading the same beautiful pages from world literature. Our first initiative was soon followed by the central library in Brussels and an Antwerp cultural centre. Then a therapeutic centre, psychiatric hospitals, libraries, social welfare centers, prisons, large city theaters, and so on.

“In a very simple way, you can bring people of all walks of life together around literature.”





**BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**

Ivana Aleksić

Ivana is an English Language and Literature teacher and Master of Arts lecturer in English Philology. For thirteen years she has been an active part of formal and informal education as a teacher or teaching assistant of English Language, English Literature and Applied Linguistics.

In 2018, I was giving conversational English classes to a graphic designer. He worked for foreign companies and he worked mainly online. At that time, the idea of working online was new to me and I had

no interest whatsoever in asking him about it or in finding out how it worked. One time, he complained that driving to school and back home again took too long and he suggested we worked online. He even encouraged me to start working exclusively online since that way I could have students from all over the world. Even though I understood the advantages, I wasn't prepared to do it. I just saw it as a distant, future possibility.

2020 brought with it all the changes that I hadn't been willing to embrace. What was once a distant future possibility just a few months earlier, all of a sudden became the only

viable option. Teaching online became my usual daily routine. It really struck me how quickly we got used to it. But it would have never happened if we hadn't been forced into it.

There are no boundaries except the ones we create ourselves. I no longer work with the graphic designer but I remember him every day. He serves as a reminder of the old me, the teacher I was before the change. If you ask me now if I think that old teacher was any

“There is no going back. Instead I continue to move forward, embracing change while remaining true to my old foundations.”

good, I would say yes. If you ask me if I would go back to my old ways, I would say no. This new way is equally as good. There is no going back. Instead I continue to move forward, embracing change while remaining true to my old foundations.

Marcin Ilski

Marcin is a systems thinking and critical thinking coach. He promotes a specific combination of attitudes called “benevolent skepticism”. He pursues his mission by organising numerous open trainings, promoting systems thinking and critical thinking on social media, and writing books.

Since 2015, I have run the *Sceptyczni Trenerzy* (*Skeptical Coaches*, formerly known as *Sad Personal Development Coaches*) website, where I promote and run workshops and training on communication, collaboration, language framing, and conflict dynamics and resolution from a systems thinking and critical thinking perspective.

“People no longer mainly look for tools to build an advantage over others. Rather they focus more on building broader psychological wellbeing and a room for cooperation and mutual support in performing tasks.”

At first, our work was treated with a bit of mistrust, and as a kind of joke. Some people, who were used to a different types of personal development workshops, were concerned that this was, I quote, “just another pop development scam”. This made us realise that we had entered a field where con-

fidence in existing methods of adult education was clearly weak. We met people fed up with motivational stories who were looking for real tools for reflection and action.

The experiences of the years with COVID-19 have changed the atmosphere of the workshops and the attitudes of their participants. A strong and explicit need to build communities that not only focus on tasks and goals, but that also focus on purpose has been expressed. Also, greater mutual curiosity and friendliness appeared. People no longer mainly look for tools to build an advantage over others. Rather they focus more on building broader psychological wellbeing and a room for cooperation and mutual support in performing tasks.



POLAND

Miroslav Pavlovic

After 25 years of a successful career in economics, Miroslav wanted to share his experiences and he is now the president of the League 33 Association, where he is also a personal mentor to many of the course participants who are members of socially vulnerable groups.



SERBIA

“As a single mother of a sixteen-year-old boy, the first thing I learned in life was how to stay calm in really stressful situations.” With this sentence, Suzana Misis begins a conversation with her future mentor, who she turned to after a call from the National Employment Service. She had been on the National Employment Service’s records for eighteen years. 18 YEARS! No work experience, no permanent employment! No health and social insurance! Without any fundamental rights in the 21st century.

“We believe that the empowerment of individuals and the inclusion of vulnerable groups do not end with the last day of our course. On the contrary.”

A few days after Suzana received the call from the Employment Bureau and decided to attend free training for single mothers, she entered the room full of cheerful women. She agreed to take a course for professional seamstresses and tailors. At the time, the Association League

33 was implemented through the project *Rapid Integration of single mothers into the labor market through training and skills mapping*.

Two months after the successful training, Suzana signed the first contracts for her company, which she opened with the help and support of League 33. We believe that the empowerment of individuals and the inclusion of vulnerable groups do not end with the last day of our course. On the contrary. “Stay calm!” her mentor tells her as she hands her the Training Certificate. “I believe that this is the most important trait that will help me be a successful entrepreneur” Suzana answers.

Today, Suzana is a strong, independent, and successful businesswoman. Suzana is just one of the ten single mothers from this group who secured economic independence and gained knowledge and skills for new successes through our training. We guided them along their path towards inclusion. This is what primarily motivates us.

Inga Jefrēmovā

Inga is the owner and manager of two companies, and she works as an accountant in a small countryside municipality.

In short, my story is: how I took advantage of the changing times, changed my life, and improved myself and how I came to achieve my long-cherished dream! Until the COVID-19 pandemic, I found it difficult to attend

courses and training in other cities as I lived in a rural region. Unfortunately, I could not make it because of work. At the beginning of the pandemic, a lot of training “moved” to the digital space, and a lot of it was free of charge! I never thought that I would

be able to study an “Artificial Intelligence” course in one year (organized by the University of Helsinki), the “Fundamentals of Digital Marketing” (which is a Google-designed course), and the “Introduction to the psychology” course at Yale University, and even the National-Bread Classes, which resulted in a certificate from Võrumaa Kutseharidkeskus. These are just a few of the opportunities I took. Still, overall, remote learning allowed me to be everywhere I wanted to be and acquire new knowledge that is useful for both my business and my everyday life!

“Remote learning allowed me to be everywhere I wanted to be and acquire new knowledge that is useful for both my business and my everyday life!”



LATVIA



POLAND

Kamila Pepiak-Kowalska

With a background in pedagogy, Kamila works as a business trainer, coach and consultant. Initially she wanted to work with children; while learning more about different approaches to learning she came across the psychology of coaching and has remained in this field ever since, working with adults.

Without a doubt my job was changed by the pandemic period. I had always dreamt about working online, so I found this period challenging but a good stimulus for my company,

forcing it to redefine itself. Now, I must admit that I love it. Especially because of the benefits I see that it gives my clients. It turns out that small chunks of knowledge delivered in 2-3h slots is fully efficient. Another crucial change I can see is in clients' expectations. Access to knowledge is huge, so trainers are expected to be proficient, well updated on a wide range of areas, spare partners for leaders and not just deliverers of knowledge. They want them to be able to gain skills, abilities and ideally work on aptitude and attitude - so deeper work is needed. I am also pleased to see changes in clients' requests in terms of topics they

need to work on - I see bigger and still greater awareness of the importance of social skills: EQ, critical and creative thinking etc. A few years ago they were treated as some fancy bonus to have, whereas now, there is a daily discussion around psychological safety during some sprint or one to one meetings.

“I see bigger and still greater awareness of the importance of social skills: EQ, critical and creative thinking etc.”

In my opinion, future challenges in the field of education in my specific area of interest will be about finding a smart way to combine effective online and offline learning while creating hybrids.

Anna Stanclik

Anna is a researcher and assistant professor at the Chair of Chemical Processes Engineering and Technology of the Wrocław University of Technology. She works as a tutor and career designer. On her website, Anna shares her knowledge and experience in career planning, talent discovery and personal branding.

When I was a teenager, I didn't know what I wanted to be in the future. I wavered between medicine, journalism and arts. What I definitely lacked at that time was support and advice from a mentor or tutor. In the end, I chose to study technology and although it was more

“My position is unique, because I can observe the development of students and encourage them to become successful. I appreciate that they place their trust in me.”

of a coincidence than an informed decision, today I find my teaching and research work fulfilling. At the same time, I am gaining knowledge and experience

in career planning, talent discovery, personal branding, new labour market trends, communication, education management and team management.

Thanks to pursuing my passions, I have gained new qualifications as a career designer and tutor. This allows me to carry out my mission, which is to help people discover their interests and skills, so that everyone can feel satisfied and fulfilled in their work and become experts in their fields. My position is unique, because I can observe the development of students and encourage them to become successful. I appreciate that they place their trust in me. By showing them ways of solving problems and overcoming difficulties, I develop my own skills and find inspiration for my work.



POLAND

Renilde Reynders

Renilde has been working for the European education programmes in Flanders for 26 years and is about the end of her professional path. Her career started more than 40 years ago as a teacher in the school she went to as a child. Before moving on to European programmes, she taught English and Dutch for 17 years. Renilde is an EPALE Ambassador.



BELGIUM

In 1995 a call was published for a coordinator for the brand-new Flemish SOCRATES agency. This agency would implement the first-ever European education and training programme, SOCRATES in Flanders. I applied and got the job. I became very involved in adult education, open and distance learning, teacher training and languages.

In 2000, the European *Grundtvig* programme was launched, providing direct funding for projects submitted for adult education, both in the formal and non-formal sector. A very strong part of *Grundtvig* were the “learning partnerships”. These were small-scale collaborations with close involvement of the target groups. These have resulted in some great projects. In addition, teachers and educators could individually go on training trips abroad.

I was able to help develop the

Grundtvig programme, start it up and watch it grow. That was tremendously exciting, thanks to the inspiration and the enthusiasm of Alan Smith of the European Commission, the same man who developed

the Erasmus student mobility scheme.

One of my dreams remains the European voluntary service for adults. Fortunately, it reappears in the new *Erasmus+*! I hope to see continued attention

paid to lifelong and life-wide learning in a European context, and this for all adults: older people, young retirees, prisoners, people with disabilities, in socio-cultural or economic difficulties...

Now my professional commitment to this European story ends, and what my life as a retiree will look like is yet to be seen. One thing is for sure: I will be happy to get stuck into volunteering again!

“What my life as a retiree will look like is yet to be seen. One thing is for sure: I will be happy to get stuck into volunteering again!”



POLAND

Sławomir Szymczak

Sławomir is an educator, vocational counsellor, social animator and researcher. He works at the Educational Research Institute as an expert in the implementation of the Integrated Qualification System. Sławomir also implements projects in the field of vocational activation of adults and works as an educator and researcher. Currently he is preparing his PhD at Adam Mickiewicz University.

I learned the practical dimension of adult education and its importance in the social activation of adults at the Familijny Poznań Foundation (Nationwide Education

Operator), where I worked from 2007 to 2018. As part of my work at the Foundation, I implemented and coordinated projects aimed at strengthening the professional qualifications of therapists working with people affected by social pathologies, professional activation of women aged 50+, and the development of civil society.

In 2018, I took on a new professional challenge. Working at the Educational Research Institute, I am mainly involved in the implementation of the Inte-

grated Qualification System. This is both training and research work.

This intensive educational activity has made me realise the importance of two values in adult education. The first is cooperation. It is important to animate environments, communities focused on collaboration and sharing knowledge, experiences and resources. The second value that is very important to me in educational work with adults is professionalism. In my work as an educator, I find time and time again that adults want to learn. At the same time, they pay more and more attention

“For me, it is important that adults receive knowledge that is not only up-to-date and correct in terms of its content but that is also methodically attractive and useful.”

to the quality of the offers. For me, it is important that adults receive knowledge that is not only up-to-date and correct in terms of its content but that is also methodically attractive and useful.

Karin Neijenhuis

Karin is a speech-language pathologist and speech therapist by training, and a lecturer and researcher at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. This combination allows her to conduct research within the Knowledge Centre for Care Innovation and simultaneously link research to practice and education.

Speech therapists are experts in advancing communication. They can be of great help to those with difficulty expressing themselves or understanding information. Speech therapists have a great deal of expertise in using the appropriate communication with a particular target group, whether for people with aphasia, hard of hearing or those with low literacy levels.

Over the course of the Minors degree Plurilingualism programme, speech therapy students of the University of Applied Sciences take a trip around Rotterdam by RET (public transport company of Rotterdam).

“Digitisation is well-intentioned, but it is essential that end-users are taken into consideration. In particular people with communication issues.”

Their task is to find out for themselves how accessible RET is when it comes to communication in their trams, on the metro and on their busses. Nowadays you encounter so many different types of information on the go, you have to look up your journey in a travel app, plan, read and understand information at the bus stop or station about departure and arrival times. Some signs provide the

same information, while others provide us with constantly changing information.

This project will hopefully contribute to raising awareness among Rotterdammers that it is not self-evident that everyone can communicate easily. At the same time, it will also be an enormously rewarding experience for the students themselves.

When I look at digital developments from the perspective of my own profession, they do not necessarily pose an additional challenge for communication-impaired people. WhatsApp, for example, may be very useful for the hearing impaired, but the same does

not necessarily apply to those with low literacy or dyslexia. Digitisation is well-intentioned, but it is essential that end-users are taken into consideration. In particular people with communication issues. People who have problems communicating ought not to become isolated if they are unable to express themselves properly. It is not always about linguistic communication. It is also about things like hospitality, and the attitude that someone adopts.



NETHERLANDS



SPAIN

Juan Camón

Juan has been Head of Communication Department at the Public Adult Training centre CEA Lorca since 2008. He is a tenured professor of English as a Foreign language (Secondary School Level), with teaching experience as an associate lecturer at the University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, UPV in Vitoria (Basque country), and Murcia University (UMU) from 2006 to 2012. He is a teacher trainer in the Murcia Ed. Department.

The European Parliament Ambassador School Programme (EPAS) aims to create a permanently increasing network of

schools across the European Union that are engaged with European Parliament activities and committed to promoting European citizenship and values.

This is not a project that only seeks to disseminate data about the EU. Above all it seeks to show students their action potential as European citizens. We are committed to creating an information point

on Europe in our adult center.

In order to involve the students and encourage their participation in developing the project, we propose activities in a transversal way to prevent students from perceiving the contents about the EU as “just another subject”. To widen the access of the school community to the content of the EPAS project we asked the other education departments to join in, hence making this project more transversal as well as promoting synergy.

“This is not a project that only seeks to disseminate data about the EU. Above all it seeks to show students their action potential as European citizens.”

Savina Moniaci

Savina is a full professor of English Foreign Language and Civilization at ITT G. Malafarina in Soverato (CZ) where she is the coordinator of the Erasmus+ team. The institute has successfully completed 10 Erasmus+ projects, is currently running 8 additional, and is accredited both in school and vocational and training field.

ITT G. Malafarina from Soverato celebrated, together with Anadolu Lisesi from Gaziantep (Turkey) and Profesionalna Gimnazia from Vratsa (Bulgaria), the Ka229 project, coordinated by the Liceul Tehnologic Sfanta Ecaterina from Urziceni (Romania). Erasmus+ mobility has engaged the students and teachers involved in a path aimed at developing skills related to social entrepreneurship; through the promotion of common civic values, equality and inclusion.

“Erasmus+ mobility has engaged the students and teachers involved in a path aimed at developing skills related to social entrepreneurship; through the promotion of common civic values, equality and inclusion.”

It was a real intercultural full immersion. Thanks to this, guests and hosts had the opportunity to implement their critical thinking and to share moments of personal and profes-

sional growth and enrichment. The visit to the Municipality of Camini was significant; a Calabrian village demographically small but outstanding for its longstanding excellence in the field of hospitality. Founded in 1999, Coop Servizi Jungi Mundu (from the Calabrian dialect: “unite the world”) has become a real family, a melting pot of ethnic groups and, above

all, a location of real-life community stories: troubled stories, stories of suffering and fear, but which, in the context of the Ionian little country, have found a happy endings.

The guests of the local Reception Centre are welcomed and accompanied in an intense process of social and work requalification. The President of Jungi Mundu, Rosario Zurzolo, speaks of the art of presence, recalling how welcoming has literally regenerated local inhabitants.



ITALY



CROATIA

Anja Rubčić

Anja is the head of management at INICIJATIVA - centre for education, where she has been working in adult education for over 17 years.

We realised back in 2019 that the pandemic was approaching Croatia fast, and we had to react immediately. Approximately 250 weekly lessons and almost 200 students

were to be moved to Zoom. It was a huge, almost daunting task to do in such a short space of time, but we made it happen. This was largely made possible by the in-house CRM system that we had built in 2016.

We are also very lucky to have this most amazing method of teaching called “The Callan Method”. It is interactive in a way that works for the students and teachers and allows for the same high quality of online lessons as in-person lessons. The Callan Method is great for helping students’ self-esteem by showing them that they can speak confidently through the mentorship of na-

tive English-speaking teachers and the no-translation rule in the classroom.

At first, I was really scared and thought Inicijativa would not survive this worldwide crisis. However, eventually we started to discover the benefits of working completely online. The first, and maybe the biggest benefit of working online was the opportunity to include adult learners that otherwise wouldn’t be able to join our educations, if the program was not online.

“The Callan Method is great for helping students’ self-esteem by showing them that they can speak confidently through the mentorship of native English-speaking teachers and the no-translation rule in the classroom.”

But at the same time, our internal team started expressing disconnection from others and problems in working from home. We decided to follow our own lead, and as a team, we signed up for online Italian lessons. That helped, and our internal group cohesion was not seriously prejudiced.



IRELAND

Patrick Phillips

Patrick has over 13 year's work experience in career guidance and recruitment. His current role involves delivering workshops via a blended learning approach, and he provides one to one career counselling sessions to students. He also works with employers to identify the right grads for their roles while providing ongoing support to our alumni. Patrick is an EPALE Ambassador.

We must start teaching students of all ages the importance of developing emotional intelligence. It is my belief that by learning to understand our internal world it will help

us to build a more sustainable future. Nietzsche argued that if you do not understand yourself you will be commanded by external forces, this is emotional intelligence in action.

Working as a guidance counsellor with adults involves helping the clients to constantly reevaluate what it is they truly want from the careers and ultimately their lives. This project is so fundamental to our wellbeing that it literally can be measured in our DNA. To move towards this goal a two-step process is nec-

“It is my belief that by learning to understand our internal world it will help us to build a more sustainable future.”

essary: we must reflect on our past to determine how this has influenced our thinking and behaviour, and we must provide our brains with a specific path forward towards the life we want.

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl hypothesised that success and happiness can only occur as by-products of a pursuit towards finding meaning in life. This is no small feat; it requires significant effort on the part of the guidance counsellor and client in order to sift through the lairs of conscious and unconscious material to identify true sources of being. My role

in this process is to act as a fellow traveller with the client, I am not the instructor or the expert who has the answers.

Hakan Yandim

Hakan has been working as an Information Technologies teacher for 15 years. He works at Bozüyük Public Education Centre, which has been providing adult education for the last 11 years. He also teaches Excel in distance learning as a lecturer at Çanakkale 18 Mart University. He has written five books in the field of Information Technologies and is also the founder and coordinator of the *1 Million Digital Literacy* project.

Taking part in adult education and educating an aspiring audience has to be the best job in the world. I love to give IT training, especially to disadvantaged groups and I am currently running projects in this field. I trained 400 mothers in my region with the *My Mom Learns Computer* project, where I gave computer literacy training to mothers. We have trained mothers who are beyond school age and have not received computer training. The trainings involved explaining how to research a subject on the internet, how to keep track of their children via e-school, how to use their e-mail addresses effectively, the basic subtleties of using computers and safe internet issues. I also enjoy participating as an instructor in projects aimed

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at increasing the digital competence of disadvantaged groups. The *No obstacle to technology* project, which I created to increase the digital literacy level of people with disabilities, is an example for this. Through the project, I ensured that persons with disabilities receive technology training individually or in groups.

The aim of our project is to enable people with disabilities to meet with technology in a conscious way, to enable them to socialise online, through social media and in the real world, to access the information they want on the internet and to encourage them to come to the public education centre and other courses.



TURKEY

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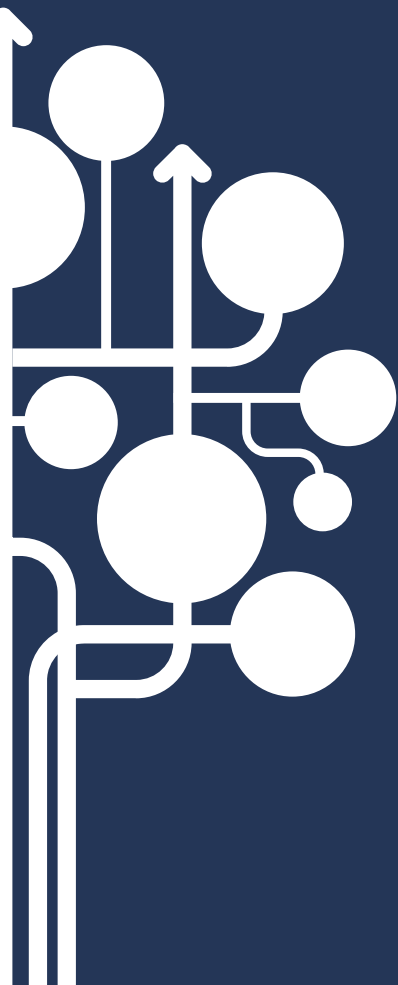
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