



# EPALE

## Community Storybook 2022

*The Scrapbook*

## Acknowledgments

The present Storybook is the result of contributions of 85 members of the EPALE community. The 2022 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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# Foreword

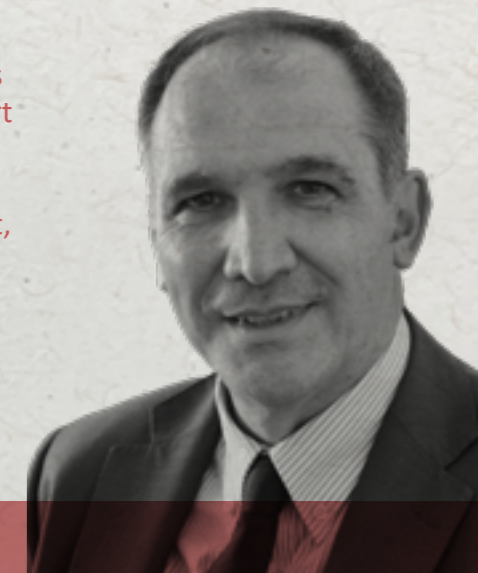
It is a pleasure for me to present to you inspiring stories collected from the EPALE Community. This storybook features unique stories of adult learning practitioners, their perspectives and experiences from the grassroots level.

The inner power of stories lies in how they can unite people. EPALE wants to build bridges among people, and to foster the efforts of adult learning professionals all over Europe. So, the 2022 EPALE Community stories put a spotlight on people, on their inner motivations and their personal experiences. We asked our community: What is your earliest memory of learning? Who was there with you to make that moment enjoyable? Why did you choose to keep developing knowledge and skills? And when did you choose to support adults in their personal and professional growth?

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.

## Roberto Carlini

director of EACEA



The aim was to explore the adult learning community, to stress out their motivation, what makes them feel accomplished at the end of the day. What makes them feel good about themselves as an adult learning professional....and how has education changed their life.

Changing lives and improving the life chances of citizens are also the goals of the wider European skills policies to which the work of the adult learning professionals contributes. Such as the EU target of at least 60% of all adults participating in learning every year by 2030 set within the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and endorsed by the Member States. Or the 2020 European Skills

Agenda - the five-year plan for skills development policies or the Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning outlining a vision of how adult learning should develop in Europe by 2030.

It is a joint effort. Each of you has a role in shaping the future. Firstly, I would like to thank those who contributed to this book. Secondly, I would like to wish all of you, EPALE readers, inspiring reading. I sincerely hope the stories will provide new food for thought as well as ideas for your further work. And who knows, perhaps some of you will contribute with your own story in the future.

*Roberto Carlini*

# Introduction

Our life experiences - the ups, downs, and everything in between - shape us. As we grow and experience new things, we change.

This scrapbook is a collection of memories and aspirations. It all started by [asking the EPALE community about their earliest memories of learning](#), including who was there with them to make that moment enjoyable.

And what about you? What makes you feel accomplished at the end of the day? What makes you feel good about yourself as an adult learning professional? And how has education changed your life?

The 2022 edition of the EPALE Community Stories presents an arrangement of professional and personal histories of 85 members of our community. From the first experiences of learning, and the early successes or disillusionments, to the motivation that keeps educators inspired every day in their practice.

Each story is connected to the others, and all together they tell a collective narrative that reveals a delicate and powerful story of lifelong learning. This Scrapbook is a vibrant collective memory and a source of inspiration.

Immerse yourself into the stories and enjoy the journey!





# *Earliest Memories*

I remember how we practiced the alphabet and short words. We had to write the letter S on paper many times over so that we would learn it. I remember how excited I was every time we learned a new letter. **Every time it would feel like my world was expanding.**

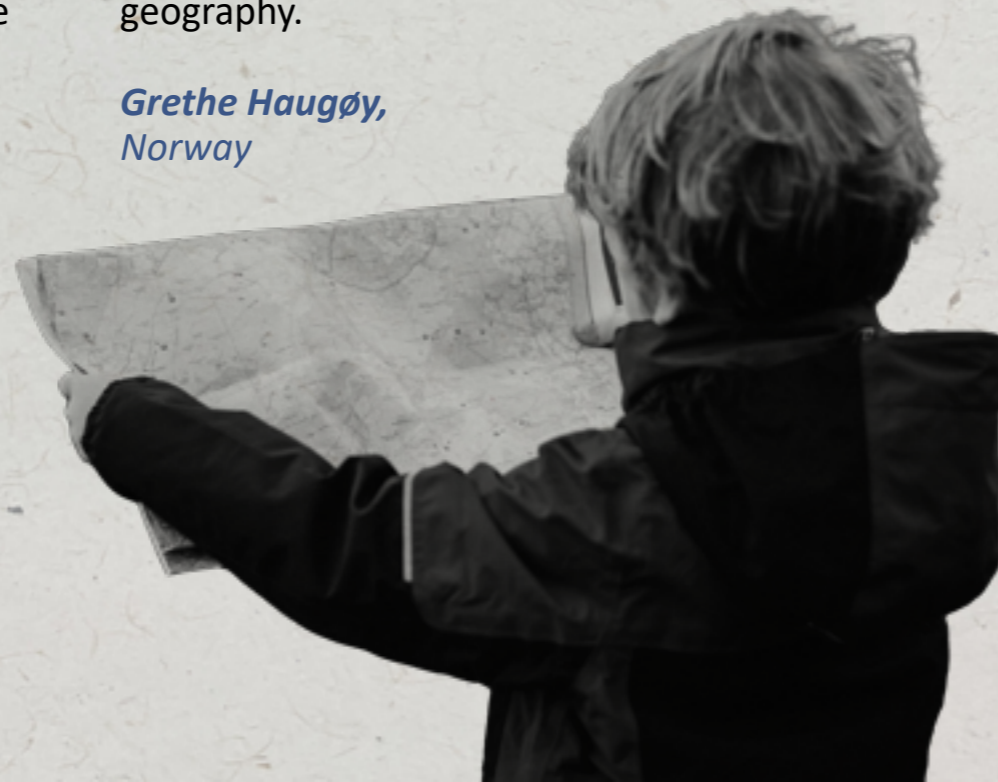
I remember thinking there was nothing better than school and learning new things. And in the moment of learning, my classmates and teacher were with me. This community meant so much because the learning event was always a shared moment we would rejoice over together.

*Stella Suojanen,  
Finland*

If I close my eyes I remember my beloved world map puzzle. I did the puzzle while lying on the wooden floor of my family home, assembling the pieces and creating a colourful image. **I couldn't read yet, but I recognised the letters making up my favourite word, Africa.**

I was intrigued by the dark green colour of the Congo basin and the deep burgundy and bluish whites of the mountains- the Himalayas, the Alps and the Andes. Even my own country Norway, a tiny narrow larva at the upper end of the map, had those colours. The puzzle gave me a first introduction to the world around me, and since then I have always had a soft spot for maps and geography.

*Grethe Haugøy,  
Norway*



I've always loved learning. Thankfully, I grew up in a family where learning and education in general was very important and encouraged for many reasons. My father had various educational experiences, and now that he's gone, that side of him has always remained with me. My mother, on the other hand, was sadly not given the same opportunities because the culture at the time put different pressures on young women. She was one of the brightest in school, but one day, her father decided to pull her out of school so she could help out in the family business. Now that she's an older woman, and suffering from the ravages of old age, she still remembers this day. **Her not being able to continue her schooling marked her life greatly and, as a doting mother, she always wanted to give her children the opportunities she was denied as a child.**

Books and studying were the norm at home. When I was young, she'd always bristle at my love for sports and insist that I focused on my studies. When I was drafted to play in the school football team, it would take lots of convincing from my father to allow me to play. This is why I am a learner at heart now, not just an educator.

*Edward Wright,  
Malta*



My earliest memories of learning take me back to the brightest moments of my childhood, when I tried to decipher the signs I saw around me that made up the world of adults. **I sensed that learning to read would open up that world to me, and I experienced enormous pleasure when, little by little, the world unfolded before me.**

*Olga Pérez Herrero,  
Spain*

I was orphaned by my father as a child and had to start working at the age of eight to provide for my family. **It wasn't easy, particularly because I like to learn new things and am curious by nature, so I liked school a lot.** However, I was not able to attend to my schooling in the way I would have wished, which is a great pity.

I didn't shirk my family duties; in my country, I had no other choice but to take care of my mother and my sister. In Africa not everyone can study and build a better future. Unfortunately, poverty and ignorance often affect and constrict the lives of many people.

*Sulayman Camara,  
Italy*



My earliest memory of learning is one of teaching! Me, aged 6, at my farm, in front of a row of leeks, neatly lined up. I told them what my schoolteacher had told me during the week (I was a boarder in Ajaccio, Corsica). They seemed to like it and they listened, very quietly. My teacher was kind to me, in a rather rough environment where harassment was banal. So in the spring, every Monday, I would bring her wild water irises that grew by our stream. **Since then, learning has an intensely earthy fragrance for me, called "petrichor" (I've since learned), and brilliant blooms, that shine and yet are shy.** Overt and covert, discovered as you round a path, that's what I enjoy in learning.


*Divina Frau-Meigs,  
France*

*If I look back...*

**If I look back at my own studies, I generally liked to study, but parental coercion and motivation were very important at the elementary school stage. Later, in technical school and university, in addition to the desire to study, the compulsion to pass exams was finally a pleasant reminder of the formation of a young person.**

*Uno Kuller,  
Estonia*





My earliest memory dates back to primary school. **I had to learn multiplication tables, and I would cry and ask: “Do I really need to do this?”** Later, when I got older, it was my mum who helped me get through secondary school. She was a teacher and felt I should earn at least some sort of formal qualification. “Once you get your diploma, you can get a job”, she told me. But by the time I finished school, I wanted to keep learning - learning and working at the same time, which is something I’ve continued to do throughout my life.


*Esther Willemse,  
Netherlands*

**While listening to the stories read by my parents, even today, I am able to see the images I had when I first met the unreal areas of imagination, this building my own realms.** That was my first learning experience. My mother would read to me frequently and shared with me the stories, thus igniting the associations of a boy who had faced the world of imagination for the first time at the age of four or five.

*Saša Klikovac,  
Montenegro*

I think that I was one in a few young people who actually knew that the term “education” referred to something great and significant. It was during the summertime, when I, quite accidentally, heard my parents talking about myself. They said that my time had come and that their little daughter was ready for school. I was almost six years old. **Based on their tone of speech and their words, which were clearly embedded into my memory, I realised that they were preparing me for an important mission.**

*Andrijana Pavićević,  
Montenegro*



As a preschooler, I vividly remember setting fire to the barn with the neighbor children at my grandparents’ place in the countryside, which fortunately didn’t burn down. **I learned to listen to my parents’ advice (don’t play with matches) and to turn to others for help.**

*Kaido Vestberg,  
Estonia*



Chalk, sponge and a storage room door in the kitchen... It may sound strange, but it was actually the beginning. That was our first little private school of non-formal education. I was the student and my older sister was the teacher. **Conscious or not, we acquired our first skills and knowledge through this game on that door.**

My sister, who works as a teacher today, has changed the storage room door with the green board, and myself, her first student, with a group of young and sweet eight-year-old pupils.

*Jelena Bojovic,  
Montenegro*



My oldest memories of learning date back to my early childhood, before elementary school. This learning refers to my grandparents who had an enormous impact on my achievements and success in both my professional and personal life.

**I feel very happy and emotional when I remember those magical moments, which even make the images from childhood come back to life: Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella ... and myself, lying on the bed and carefully listening to my granddad while he read to me with patience and ease.** The willingness and desire for learning never disappeared, so today, as a mature person I have a huge need, more than ever, to learn and transfer knowledge to other people.

*Olivera Markovic,  
Montenegro*

I read books and watched television. **Even before I started school, books fascinated me so much that I learned them by heart.** I could not miss TV shows. I especially remember the educational ones, but I always loved documentaries and animated films. At school, I listened to all the subjects with my mouth and ears open.

*Darijan Novak,  
Slovenia*

My story about learning takes me back to my earliest childhood, when I spontaneously, before entering the education system, started to ask numerous questions: "why" and "how". When I tried to find the answers myself...

**Luckily, such curiosity and an incessant desire to learn new things, to get to know the world around me, did not lose intensity over time.**

*Snežana Kršikapa,  
Montenegro*

I should confess that I was kind of an underachiever at school, and my years at primary and secondary school are a bit of a blur now - although I do remember some of the mischief I would get into. In my last year of primary school, when the time had come to choose a secondary school, my parents were told that I'd be lucky to get a MAVO (junior general secondary education) diploma.

As it turned out, I did attend a MAVO school, but I later transferred to a HAVO programme (senior general secondary education) and went on to study social science at college and earned a postgraduate degree.

**Well, if I had to say which of my educational experiences have been most valuable to me, I suppose it would be some of the extracurricular, informal learning activities I've been involved in - all very hands-on.**

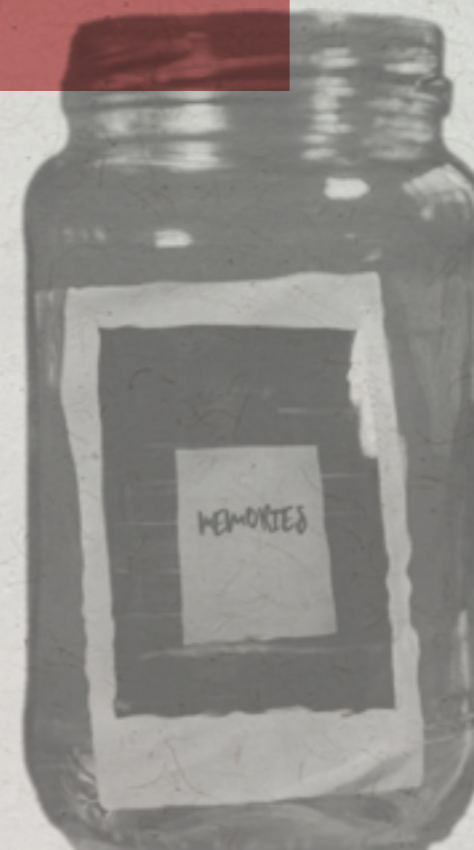
*Lidwien Vos de Wael,  
Netherlands*



My first memories of learning come from my childhood, when I was being prepared for school by my grandmother, because I did not attend kindergarten. During my elementary school years, I actively participated in dancesport and attended education interest groups. I focused on debates and participated in a workshop for young people's ideas.

**I was greatly inspired by my sister, who was actively participating in student self-government and was a volunteer for the Latvian Red Cross youth organisation.**

*Agnese Lejniece,  
Latvia*



**I don't believe I experienced learning then as I do today.** As a child, it was important to learn to behave like the other kids, so that one wouldn't miss out on the circle of friends. In other words, learning took place early for different purposes in life.

*Elli Rikkola,  
Finland*





**I remember when I was first taught the word “learning” when I started school. First, it ruined the joy of learning - why would I want to do something that I am forced to do?** I remember my discussions with my mother, who was upset about the fact that I was coming home with empty notebooks because I had not paid attention to the teachers. I don’t remember how she convinced me, but in the end, I finished elementary school.

*Krista Anna Zalāne,  
Latvia*

**My earliest memory of studying is when I learned to ride a bicycle without auxiliary wheels when I was about three years old.**

I also remember that English was taught in kindergarten, which seemed like science fiction even at the age of five or six because I was born in the Soviet Union. I also have a clear memory of learning songs as a child, because I grew up in a family of musicians, where people around me sang and played instruments. This is a great memory of non-formal learning.

*Halliki Põlda,  
Estonia*



I grew up in the US. My first memory of learning was in our small back garden. My father showed me how to sow and harvest and how to grow flowers between vegetables for pollination. **That small garden was my world!**

*Ann Doherty,  
Netherlands*

**When I attended the third class of primary school, I was sure I would be a teacher, to show that, unlike mine, even teachers have a heart.** Then it was the missionary's turn; I changed my mind when they told me that in Africa there were snakes. Next, I decided I wanted to study medicine, but I soon discovered the hard way that the sight of blood made me faint. For a whole year, until my first recital, I decided that by dancing I would become a star of the stage, but my mother persuaded me that dance didn't really offer good prospects.

*Wilma Greco,  
Italy*

The importance of learning was taught to me at an early age. My grandmother, when showing me new crafts or handicrafts, always reminded me, "You cannot do this all your life, but you have to learn how to do it". **This laid the foundations for my understanding of continuous learning.**

*Ērodeja Kirillova,  
Latvia*



My first memories of learning are about a teacher standing next to my mother and asking about the letters on the typewriter, which letter is which. That's how I accidentally learned the letters in early childhood. **Life is about constant learning. In a certain situation, a person learns with pleasure; in another situation, learning may be reluctant.**

*Helge Alt,  
Estonia*

**I was the happiest child in the world when I was allowed to go to first grade.** Finally I learned to read and write and was done with cutting and tinkering. A mostly happy time in which I, as a pupil and later student, got a broader view of our complex world from inspiring teachers.

*Siegfried Coudenys,  
Belgium*

As a child in the second grade of primary school, I was sad to see people carelessly throwing old machines, car wrecks, tires, and other garbage everywhere in the forest. So, I wrote and stuck posters in my home village about how and where garbage should be disposed properly. **No one took the little kid seriously. However, everything we do that turns out to be unsuccessful isn't in vain.**

*Alen Stranjik,  
Croatia*



As a child, I used to dream of having the book of wisdom, so if I read it then I would know everything. I was reading hundreds of books! As an adult, I got to know that no matter how many books I read and learned from, there is a contradiction - the more you learn, the more you know that you know very little. Another thing I learned is that not all human wisdom is written in books but one can learn every day from other people, by sharing your experiences and knowledge.

*Kadi Kass,  
Estonia*

**I still remember my father taking me to school for the first time - I was excited, but also really nervous. Until a teacher taught me that learning isn't scary at all, and that it's okay to make mistakes. That teacher had a big impact on me and made learning fun.**

After secondary school, I wanted to study something prestigious, like medicine or engineering. I did well in school, so that was also what other people expected of me. But then I met a classmate on the bus who told me he was going to study English literature, and he was really motivated. Why? Because he loved English. And I realised I felt the same way. I was already taking an English course at the time, and I liked the language. So I decided to study something I enjoyed instead of worrying about other people's expectations.

*Mazen Ba-baeer,  
Netherlands*



*Becoming*





Difficulties have taught me a lot and have not been lacking in my life, but I have faced them as challenges, making me stronger and more confident. I consider myself an independent and hard-working woman, made by myself. **The road has not been easy until I became who I am, but it is worth it, a lot.** It is worth going through the difficulties you encounter until you achieve what you propose.

*Chams dha El faghloumi,  
Spain*

As a naturally restless person, I've done many things in my life. Namely volunteering to help homeless people, horse riding and working as a riding instructor for children with disabilities, bird watching, photography, and social/environmental activism.

I also worked for almost a decade in NGOs with people in a situation of social emergency. This mostly involved desperate social cases that had no support from the formal social care system. It was extremely demanding and often very frustrating, but it taught me to deal with apparently unsurpassable obstacles and to persevere against all odds. **Above all, it showed me how resilient people can be in extreme circumstances and how a little understanding and support can go a long way.**

I started going to therapy which I found this helpful in exploring and critiquing the assumptions I was making about myself. I began working on building my confidence and I took more control of the direction my life was taking. Very slowly, I started to see results and I eventually discovered my calling in life.

*Camila Rodrigues,  
Portugal*

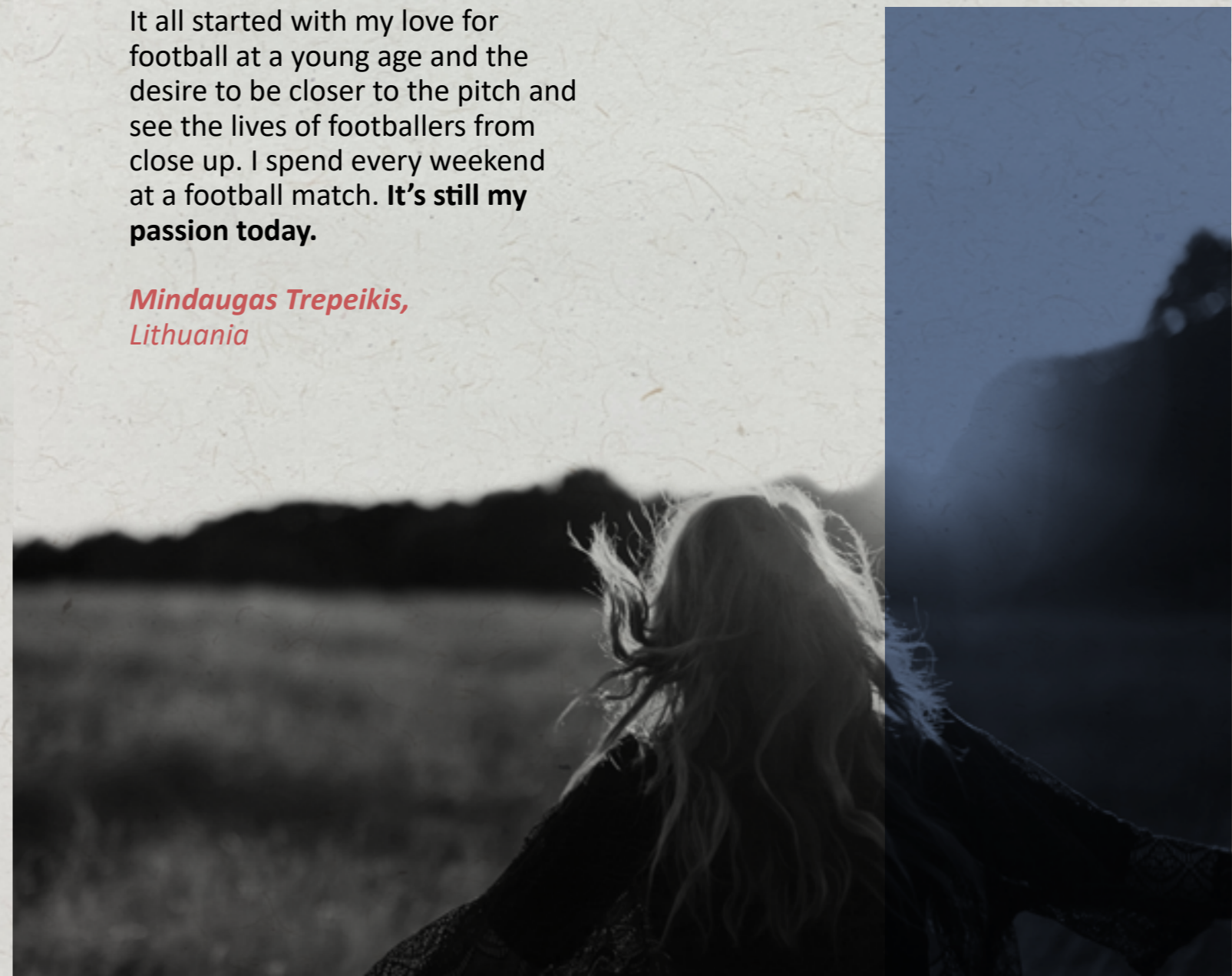
On the surface, my biography reads like a French middle-class success story: I had the best grade average at the French baccalaureate, graduated into the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and ended up teaching at the Sorbonne Nouvelle.

**Under the surface, this story tells a journey of recovery:** daughter of poor immigrant illiterate farmers, who benefited from public service education to move up the social ladder and strives to pass it on to others.

*Divina Frau-Meigs,  
France*

It all started with my love for football at a young age and the desire to be closer to the pitch and see the lives of footballers from close up. I spend every weekend at a football match. **It's still my passion today.**

*Mindaugas Trepeikis,  
Lithuania*





I was a weak student at secondary school and at university. My final year exam results at secondary school were abysmal and I was unable to go to college until I completed a bridging qualification. However, even when I did finally qualify for college, I did not know what I wanted to do. I completed a degree eventually, but I was totally lost. **I had low self esteem and did not understand what I wanted from life.**

*Patrick Phillips,  
Ireland*

During my adolescence I was a person with low self-esteem and weak self-confidence. **I needed to please everyone and I always put other people's interests ahead of my own interests.** Later, as an adult, I studied and researched about self-confidence and how to develop it.

*Sandra Félix,  
Portugal*



**There are things that happen by chance and things that happen because you are looking for them. Well, my life is a combination of the two.** Although I strongly believe that we all have the power to guide our own future, it's of course not all in our hands...

I arrived at the end of university with very confused ideas, I didn't want a legal career but I also didn't want an occasional and unstable job. I was looking for a dynamic working relationship that would take me abroad and allow me to continue to feed my curiosity to know people, places, and to broaden my knowledge and skills. The beginning was precisely in the name of this exploration.

*Sergio Cabigiosu,  
Italy*

**I didn't have an easy path to success in school.** I worked systematically, but I didn't like teaching patterns, hierarchical school management, or monotonous activities that introduced nothing new to my knowledge.

*Lidia Pokrzycka,  
Poland*



**Reading helped me to beat the odds against working class girls.**

I became an avid reader, and if I didn't have a book on hand I would read everything else from the text on milk cartons to my cousin's football magazines (even if I didn't play football), cartoons, my older sister's science books, my mother's cookbooks and even my father's technical manuals! Today I know that growing up in a home with books and especially where mothers are active readers is fertile ground for becoming a good student.

*Grethe Haugøy,  
Norway*



My choice of studies and training in teaching Italian is linked to a desire to escape from a small hill town in southern Italy, Cisternino, the place of my family home that has always accompanied and trained me in these years of growth. **The vision of the landscape, the historic center, and the locals was my first form of personal discovery in the world, the birth of curiosity.** The fear of remaining anonymous made me destined to follow in my father's footsteps.

*Francesco D'Errico,  
Italy*

My career as an educator has progressed naturally. Both my parents and my brother are directly or indirectly involved in education, so education is in my blood. Even my husband is a teacher by education. **It's nice to see how synergy is created in the training group: joint efforts are made to solve problems, and successes are celebrated together.**

*Viibeke Turba,  
Estonia*

When my daughter became independent, I finally followed my dreams and studied psychology. **The desire to continue on this path suddenly awakened in me.** I continued my master's studies. I travelled. I passed exams, and studied at work, home, and on the bus. It was difficult, but luckily, I was surrounded by people who supported me and replaced my parents.

*Olena Bulgakova,  
Poland*

I burned out like a bright flame. **When you're young and enthusiastic, you still think you can change the world.** At one point I realized that it's not possible to do this. So, I continued to teach at the university, but I had to decide what to do next in life. That's when I started to see myself as more than just an adult educator.

*Helina Kibar,  
Estonia*



One day, we went to play in the prison of Leuven. In the small but cozy theater, I sat in the middle of the inmates at the mixing desk. Besides the fact that I found it exciting, I was especially impressed by the ordinary that took place there. It was a performance like all good performances outside, with a slow warm-up to the right apotheosis at the end. What was 'different', however, was the incredible attentive concentration of each of the men there. **They enjoyed it intensely, in great respect for all of us.**

*Lut Lippeveld,  
Belgium*

For almost twenty years, I never thought about studying or learning. I was a businesswoman deeply engaged in the management of my endeavours, and I didn't have time to think about learning new things and acquiring new knowledge. **When I was 40 years, I started to feel stagnated. I felt that what I was doing wasn't enough and didn't fulfil me anymore.** Today, with 50 years, one daughter and two cats, my priorities have changed dramatically.

*Raquel Pelicano,  
Portugal*

**Adult education and lifelong learning have greatly changed my personal and professional life** and will certainly continue to change, improve, and adapt it to new work challenges in the coming years, and this is what makes one a useful contribution to the society of knowledge and economic growth.

*Željka Ciler,  
Croatia*



I made my first training attempts in the mid-1990s while working in a bank, where I had to invent new things and sell those ideas to others. I developed myself more systematically in the Estonian Chamber of Entrepreneurial Youth. **There was a favorable environment - mistakes were allowed, and the patience of my colleagues was great because, by experimenting, polishing things, and trying again, it was possible to create something interesting and useful for others.**

*Elmo Puidet,  
Estonia*

When I looked back to try and identify my first contact with adult education, I realized that it was the day I obtained my pedagogy specialist university degree. **It was the moment when I became aware that although I had completed formal schooling, it was just the beginning of my life-long learning and education process.**

*Marica Ognjenovic,  
Montenegro*





*Everyday  
Efforts*

**One of the most striking experiences was following women who were self-taught, particularly in music, and who needed to develop their personal careers by obtaining diplomas.** We noticed many issues of maintaining employment, inclusion and access to digital tools.

*Roseline Le Squère,  
France*

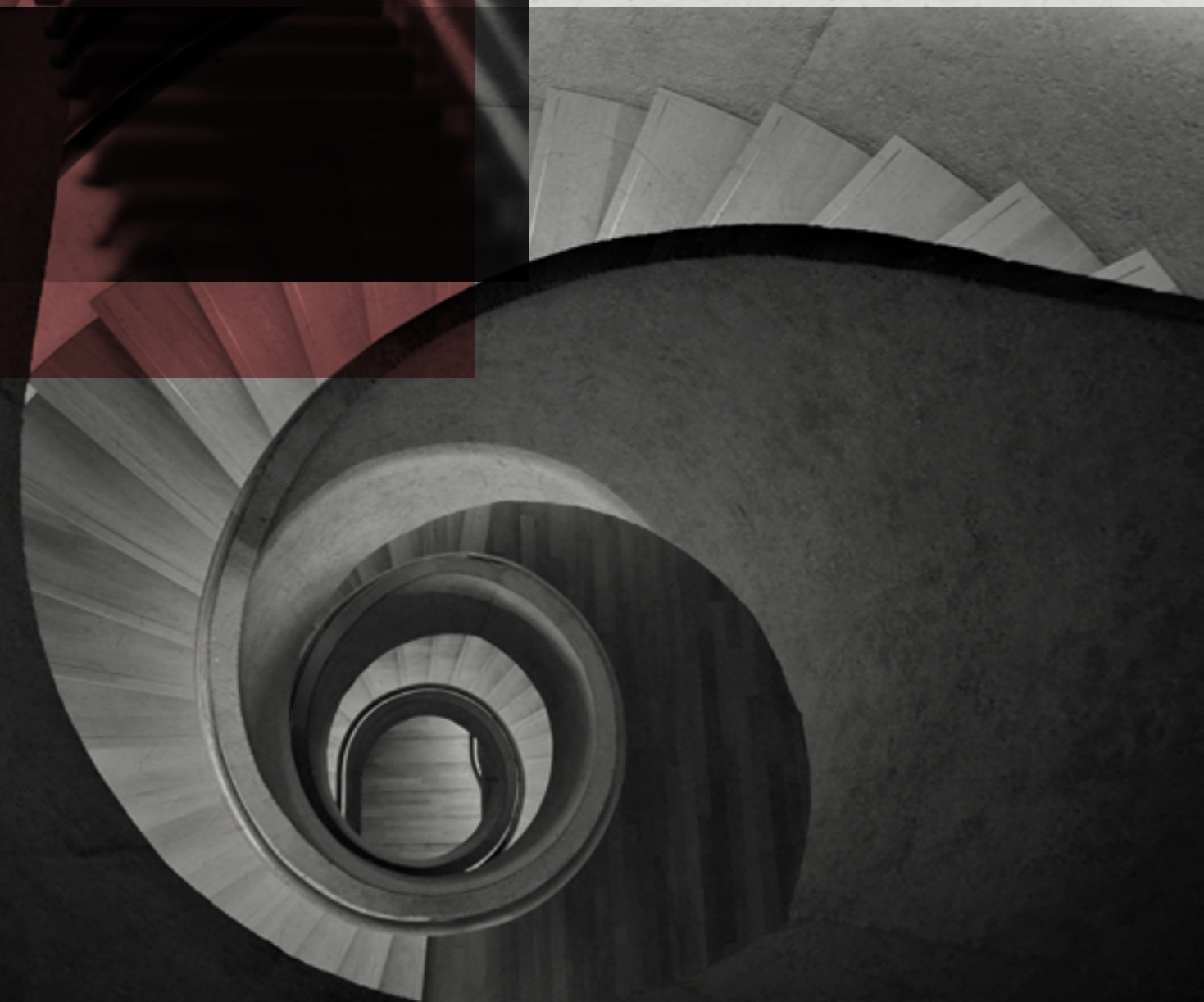


**Creativity as a basic skill is not just a purpose, but also a tool for self-development, which gives you greater support in life.** Other fundamental skills that I feel are undervalued are, for example, civic (citizenship) skills, social skills, and resilience.

*Lianne Knobel,  
Netherlands*

**I strive to develop the civic competencies of older adults in the field of heritage conservation through educational activities in the context of lifelong learning.**

*Kateřina Pávková,  
Czech Republic*





**I find the combination between theory and practice to be so essential: I explain how to plant lettuce or carrots AND we talk about climate change, soil and land politics, and the link between agriculture and nature.** Every person has the right to be able to grow or buy local food... And yes, that is politics.

*Ann Doherty,  
Netherlands*

**Climate change and global warming affect an agricultural work.** This issue has become key in the strategic plans of the association and it is the main focus of the educational activities of my association.

*Ludmila Kabelová - Michaela Vachunová,  
Czech Republic*



Vitality also has an impact on people's overall willingness to learn and develop. **If you're not supported by those around you or if you're not in the right place to use your talents, you'll be less willing or inclined to learn.**

*Saskia Goutziers,  
Netherlands*

**We are still learning and facing new challenges in our sustainability journey,** however I enjoy supporting the communities during this process, being involved in creating and maintaining sustainable relationships, inviting artists to help to create the most beautiful creations from already used raw materials.

*Daiva Nakrošienė,  
Lithuania*





**Originally from Ukraine, in the current situation every kind of help, both material and spiritual, is essential.** When it was announced in April this year that the Museum of Warsaw was launching an inclusion and education project for people with refugee experience from Ukraine, I did not hesitate for a moment. Finally, I had the chance to use my pedagogical and psychological competencies. I became involved in the project to support Ukrainian women and families.

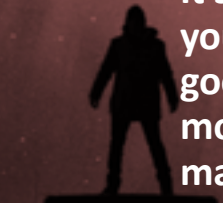
*Olena Bulgakova,  
Poland*

Following Russia's attack on Ukraine, aside from the desire to contribute, one thing I've felt this year is that another important reason is the overall feeling of uncertainty in society. **One way to cope with insecurity is to increase knowledge. I have the knowledge and skills to cope with the crisis.** As a trainer, I can share it with others and thereby increase the sense of security in my community and therefore in society as a whole.

*Kadi Kass,  
Estonia*

I believe that my role as an animateur is to build a foundation for being together in a group and to listen carefully to the needs of the people you work with. **Sometimes I have to challenge them, and other times show them that the sky is the limit.**

*Aleksandra Chomik,  
Poland*



**It's not easy but like all things in life, you have to commit yourself, set a good example and be a positive role model for others... I also wanted to make my mother proud.** Since I was a child she has always taught me, "Wherever you go in the world, look how people behave and learn to behave like them." I have committed myself as much as possible and I'm happy to be here, even though I miss my country and my family very much.

*Sulayman Camara,  
Italy*



Adult education is an experience-based aspect of education and learning. **It makes adults responsible for their activities, provides them with a certain freedom of work along with clearly defined rules, and, generally speaking, the learning process is based on a need for learning.**

*Marica Ognjenovic,  
Montenegro*



**I invest all my daily efforts in working on an innovative pedagogical proposal,** in which I consider both the intellectual development of students and their personal, emotional, and social growth, promoting freedom of thought, critical thinking, and social commitment.

*Raquel Lorenzo,  
Portugal*



*ideas*

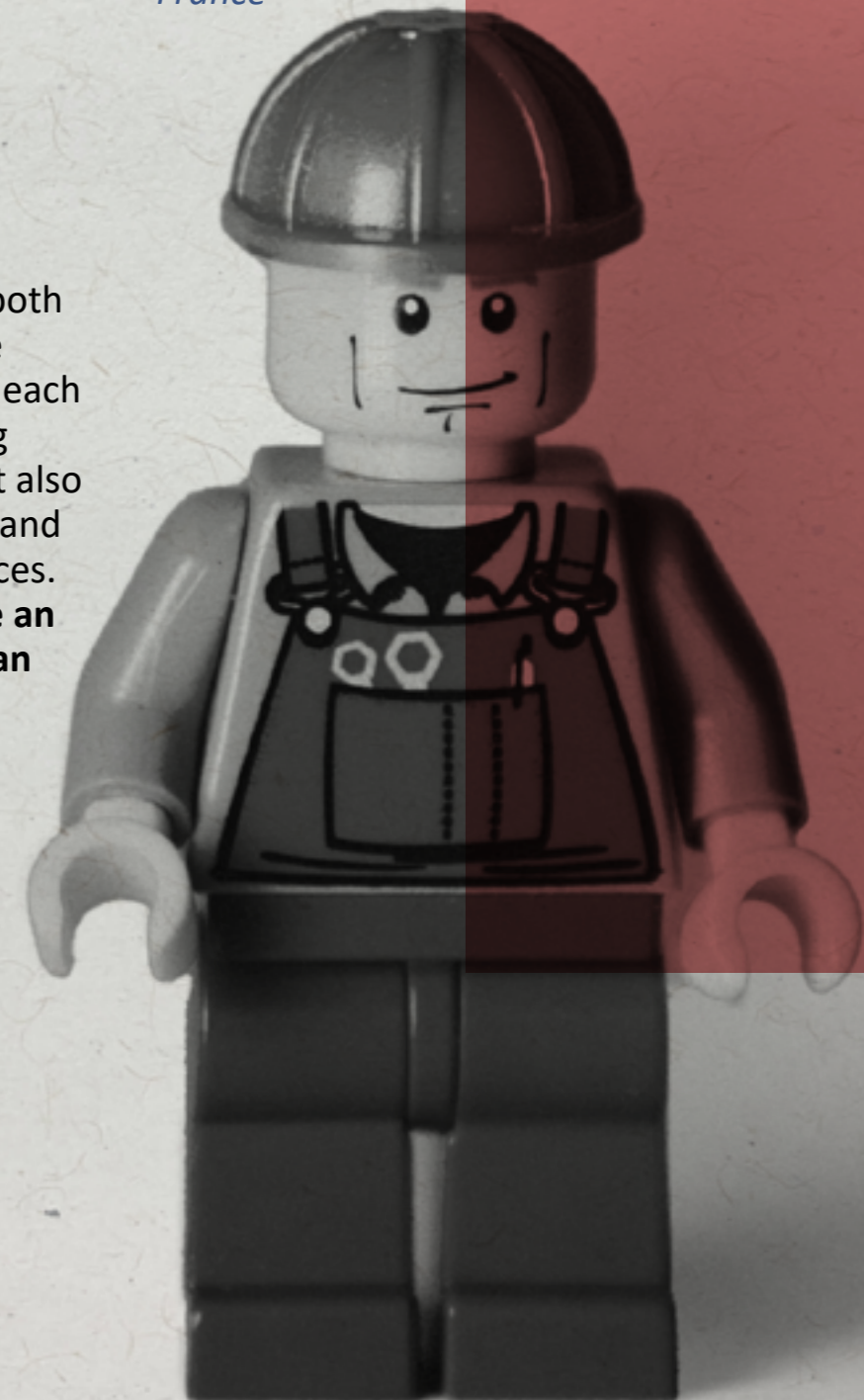
*Thierry Ardouin*

**I am a real product of lifelong learning,** in the positive sense of the term as a construction, a joint elaboration of oneself with others and society, therefore encounters, and a desire to learn.

*Thierry Ardouin,  
France*

For me, it is essential to work both with and for the people we are addressing, to mutually enrich each other's skills. Indeed, designing projects is great, but they must also be tested in the field, adapted and enriched by personal experiences. **I often say that you have to be an engineer as well as a handyman to succeed in a project.**

*Sophie Alex-Bacquer,  
France*





Ever since my graduation, I have been unlearning. **What do I mean by unlearning? To me, it is constantly asking questions, being open to the public's objections to the museum's activities, a non-dogmatic following of set paths and a willingness to listen to other people's voices.** This is a demanding process. It is so mainly because a fundamental skill of an educator is flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the audience.

*Maria Masternak,  
Poland*



I also evolve due to my adult learners, who come to the training with different knowledge and life experience. **I can learn from them, and the next time I do a similar training, I will be richer in some vital nuances to share with my students.**

*Aile Nõupuu,  
Estonia*



That's when I slowly started building my awareness of learning from scratch. I started with questions - **What are my strengths? What do I learn in general?**

*Krista Anna Zalāne,  
Latvia*

People have a treasure called **curiosity** in their hearts. It is the excitement of making discoveries, the elated feeling of taking on difficult challenges, and the exhilaration of expanding their world. We've all experienced such feelings as education is popularised, and the internet provides instant access to various kinds of information.

*Hideaki Uenishi,  
Belgium*





When training adults, the synergy that occurs between the instructor and the learner is especially important. **Sometimes, I blend in with the students so much that it doesn't matter who is teaching whom or who is learning.**

*Margus Maripu,  
Estonia*

**As a teacher, in prison I brought together all the messed up parts of me: the missionary, the doctor, the volunteer, the teacher...** and at 50, when you should start thinking about retirement, I decided to apply for a PhD on the prison experience. It has taken me three years, two of which under Covid; three exciting years in which I approached the academic world with a lot of humility and simplicity, but also with stubbornness, determined to finish my doctorate at all costs, despite my not so young neurons, the prevailing headaches, and the fact that I lacked basic research skills.

*Wilma Greco,  
Italy*



**Learning as an adult is anything but being in the comfort zone.** Based on this, I do my best to make my learners feel safe and well cared for while acquiring new knowledge.

*Maigi Lepik,  
Estonia*



The lifelong learning of students also requires the lifelong development of the trainer: digital competence, renewed learning environment, sectoral technologies, normative documents, and social communication. Since adult learners are focused on improving their knowledge, this strongly motivates the professional development of the trainer. **The development of the trainer supports the development of the trainees.**

*Uno Kuller,  
Estonia*

**The task of the trainer is not to offer the right answers, but to create a suitable toolbox for crafting solutions** for the training participant with the help of meaningful questions and the right amount of shared pieces of knowledge.

*Maarja Tsimmer,  
Estonia*



My path and everyone's path consist of accumulative learning experiences in different spheres of life. **We learn new things, and we give up on other things without stopping.** In my opinion, this is fundamental to being human.

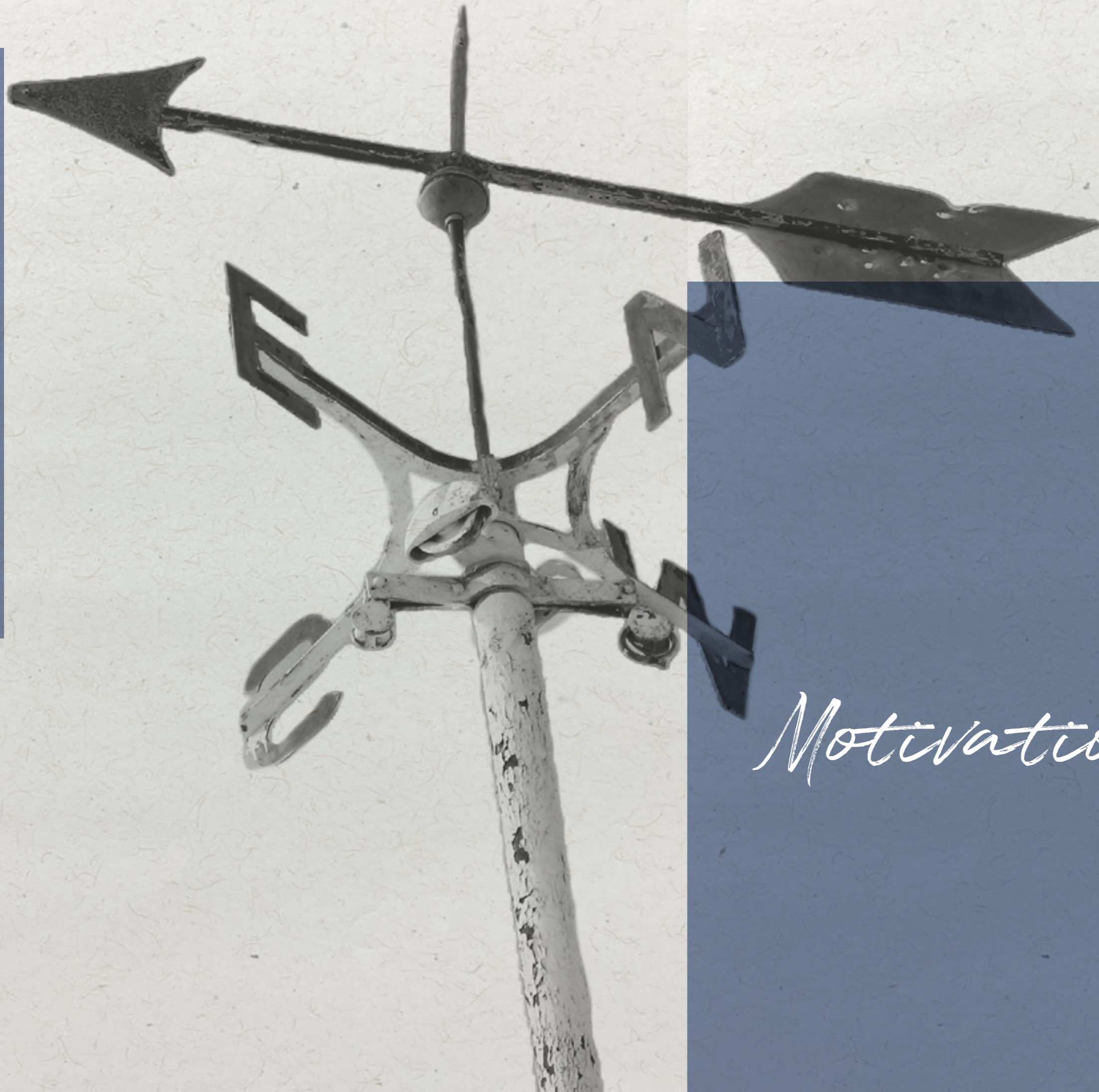
*Elli Rikkola,  
Finland*



Everyone needs to feel good. **If you want to learn, you need to feel safe and be in the right headspace.** All these things go hand in hand.

*Sylvia de Groot Heupner,  
Netherlands*





*Motivation*



Learning makes me feel good. I always felt proud of the things I had learned. I became ever more eager when I noticed that my parents and relatives respected my new skills and knowledge. **I felt that by learning new things, I could expand my world. Learning one new skill always offered a link to another skill.** By learning something, you unconsciously learn something else, and so a learning cycle is born.

**Stella Suojanen,**  
Finland



**Working on listening to the personal aspirations and cognitive interests of students is always surprising.** Each student becomes passionate about their chosen learning path and achieves remarkable results while working in a pleasant way.

**Mariadaniela Sfarra,**  
Italy

**Education did not only influence and shape my life, education is my life!**

**Andrijana Pavićević,**  
Montenegro



**I am happy that my dreams are coming true and that I can share them with others.**

**Mindaugas Trepeikis,**  
Lithuania

Today, coaching is part of my daily job. I still have a lot of work to do but it does not scare me, on the contrary it is a stimulus. **I think that this idea of “never being arrived” is a beautiful awareness** that eases the burden of expectations that every trainer feels and helps to keep the arrogance of knowledge at bay that can infect any good trainer.

*Sergio Cabigiosu,  
Italy*



Learning is the way to achieve whatever we want to do in our lives, considering it provides new resources, perspectives and opportunities. **More than anything, it is a gift we should give ourselves.**

*Raquel Pelicano,  
Portugal*

Experiencing success is definitely the strongest trigger for everyone, but also for the (vulnerable) adult learner.

*Lut Lippeveld,  
Belgium*

I learn from people I meet in daily life, from the creativity and the power of those who have severe challenges.

*Lidwien Vos de Wael,  
Netherlands*

Fuel your passion





Learning does not know limits, each day is a unique opportunity to learn something new, to share knowledge and enrich experiences.

*Snežana Kršikapa,  
Montenegro*



Thinking of what motivates me to be part of the education process, would certainly mean a long list. **Highlights are the smiles of adult learners when they realize that they learnt something new, when they become aware that something what seemed impossible turned out to be possible**, joint learning of new things and the hope that the learners will transfer their positive experience and thus encourage other people to learn and develop professionally.

*Jelena Bojovic,  
Montenegro*

**You learn more about yourself by teaching.** By teaching you learn, and learning is a means of finding your true self by being in touch with what is around you.

*Helina Kibar,  
Estonia*

**I am the happiest person when an adult learner approaches me with gratitude for supporting them** when they had the most difficult time in their education, when I come up with a new design, new project, or a new activity, or when in crisis situations I find the best solution to solve a problem.

*Željka Ciler,  
Croatia*



**I wanted my study discovery to become something widespread among those who start from disadvantage.** Fresh from my Australian experience, I was aware of what it means to have difficulty and to feel frustration in not being able to communicate or be understood.

*Francesco D'Errico,  
Italy*



I think that becoming aware of our own vulnerability helps us to better understand the vulnerability of others, and this allows us to find ways of taking action, both with and for others. **Breaking out of clichés means discovering that you don't have to be a hero to get involved.**

*Sophie Alex-Bacquer,  
France*

I myself learned the most from people I was close to. **In the end, it all comes down to human contact, and the people whose encouragement gave you the confidence you needed - who said things like "you can do it" or "keep at it, you're almost there".** Learning about yourself is often more important than any specific skill you acquire.

*Sylvia de Groot Heupner,  
Netherlands*

**Collaboration is empowering and uplifting and promotes growth, which in turn improves well-being, health, participation, understanding, and by extension respect for the world we live in.** This ultimately benefits both education professionals and students.

*Lianne Knobel,  
Netherlands*





**Almost every detainee is released one day. Therefore, from day one of detention, a detainee should be given help and opportunities to prepare for a return to society.** Learning is an essential part of this. After all, learning during detention provides detainees with tools to grow, strengthen themselves and ultimately contribute to society.

*Liesbeth De Donder,  
Belgium*



Being an adult education specialist makes me feel great for each action and activity in the field of education which contributes to the reduction of the gap among people, predominantly among the educated and non-educated. **I think that each person was born for something they can and know how to do.** They only need equal opportunities and support to find “themselves”.

*Olivera Markovic,  
Montenegro*



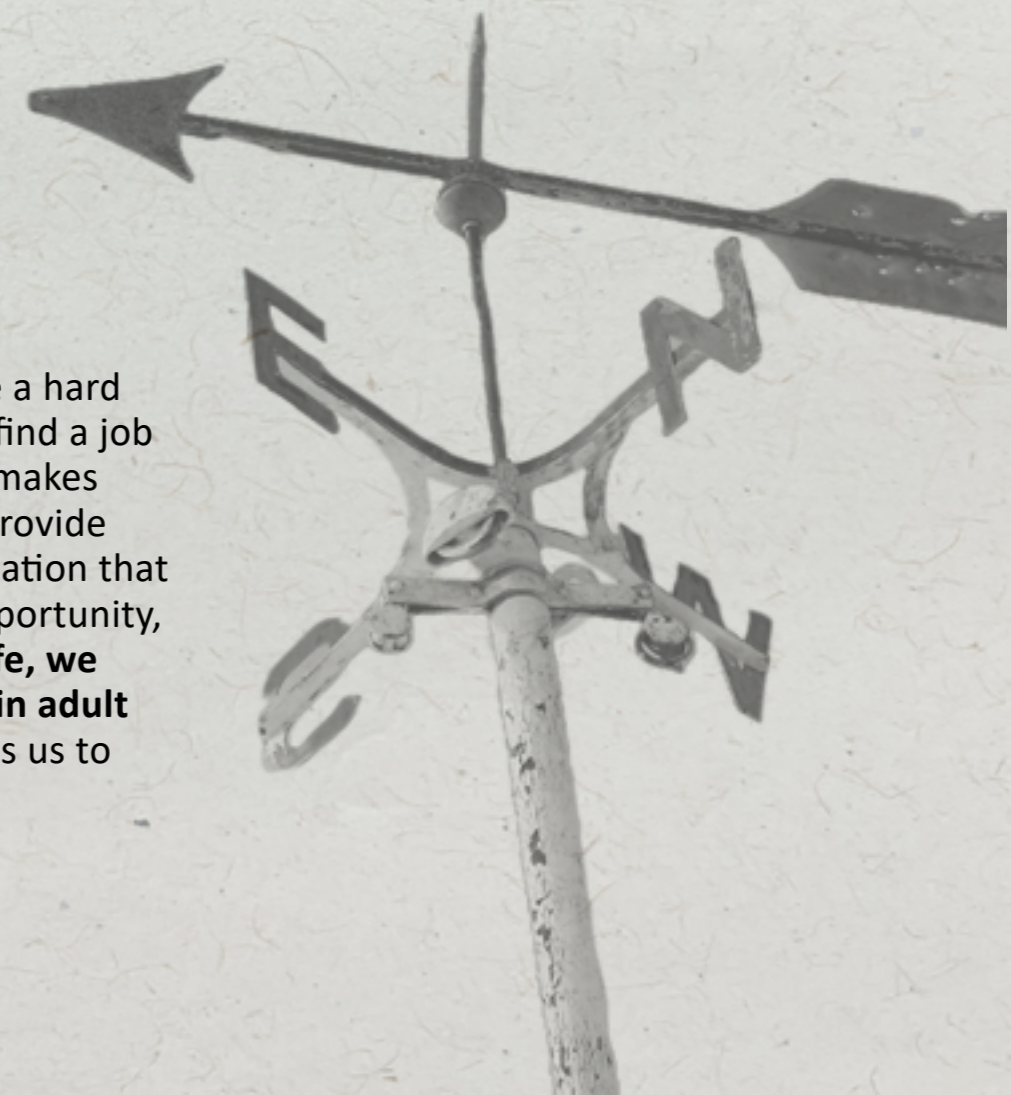
If someone crosses the boundaries in their personal life, they usually become brighter in their professional life, and on the contrary, learning at work has also given shine to many people's personal lives.

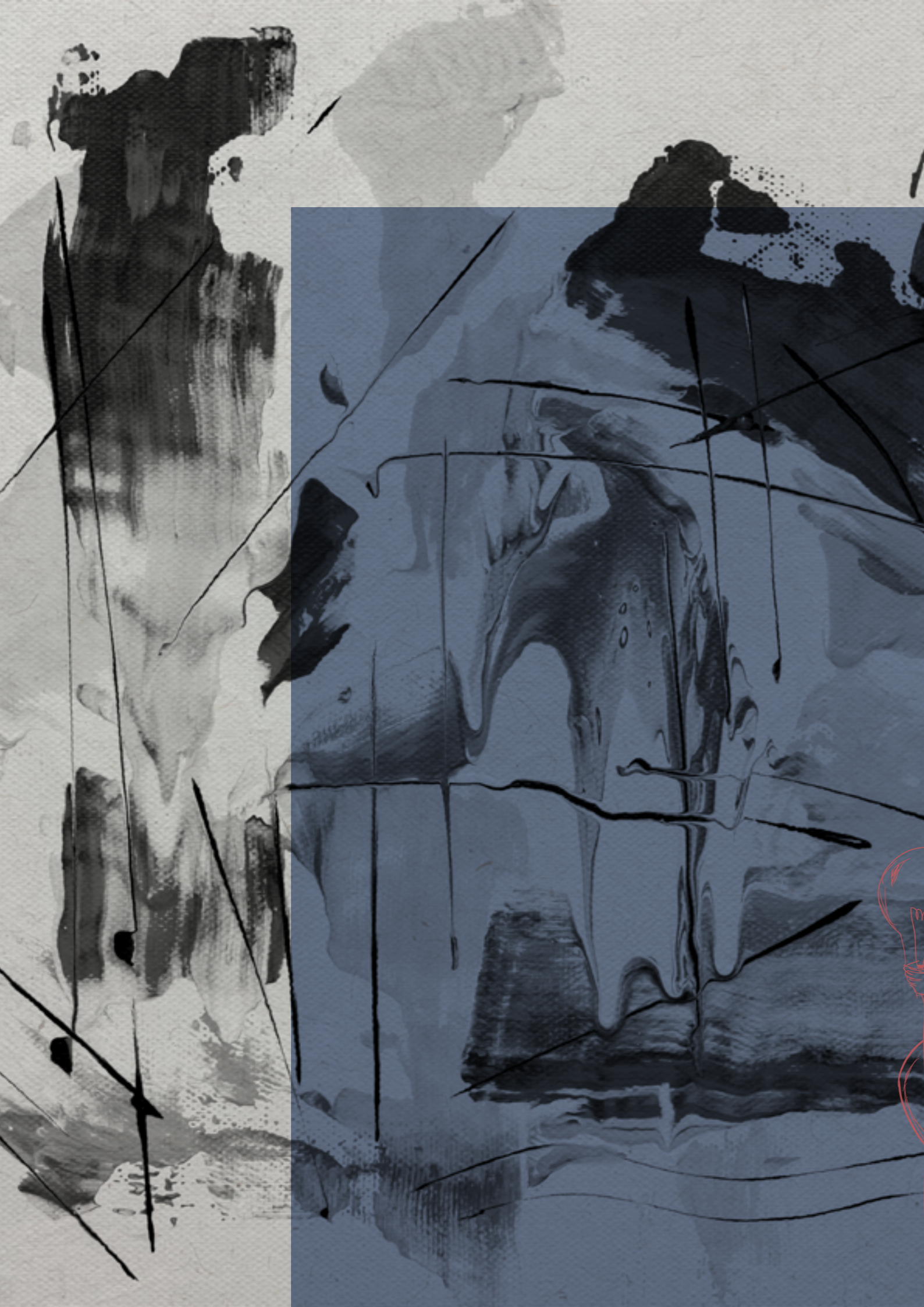
**I feel immense joy when I have been able to change someone's life for the better or inspire them to do something new, to develop.**

*Helge Alt,  
Estonia*

When people experience a hard time because they can't find a job or do a difficult job that makes them unhappy, and we provide them with the right education that will lead to a new job opportunity, **a different, and better life, we feel the beauty of work in adult education.** This motivates us to continue.

*Alen Stranjik,  
Croatia*





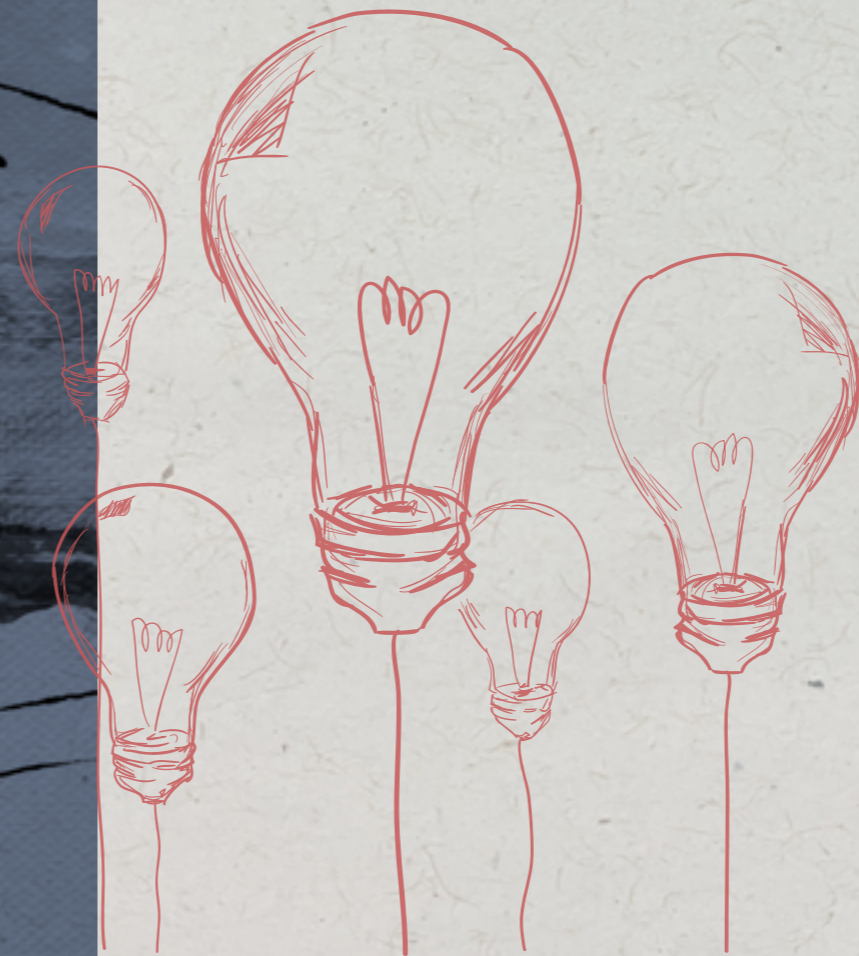
**The more aware our teachers are about talent, including their own talents, the better they notice the talents of others around them.** Being a creativity teacher at an art school, I consider it important to create opportunities in childhood for the all-around development of the students' talents. After all, they are our future talented adults and lifelong learning participants.

*Kristina Such,  
Estonia*



For me, being an educator means a great responsibility. **People come to learn and improve themselves, and the question inevitably arises whether my knowledge is sufficient.** It motivates me to develop.

*Martti Kivi,  
Estonia*



**To be a good teacher, one must have a student's perspective, enthusiasm, and desire to learn throughout their life.**

*Georgia Ropi,  
Greece*

**Being a trainer is more than a role, activities, skills, competencies, knowledge, and use of methods.**

For me, it is a process of identity, learning and creation, and discovery, as well as cooperation, clarification of one's own position and values, deepening, and communication.

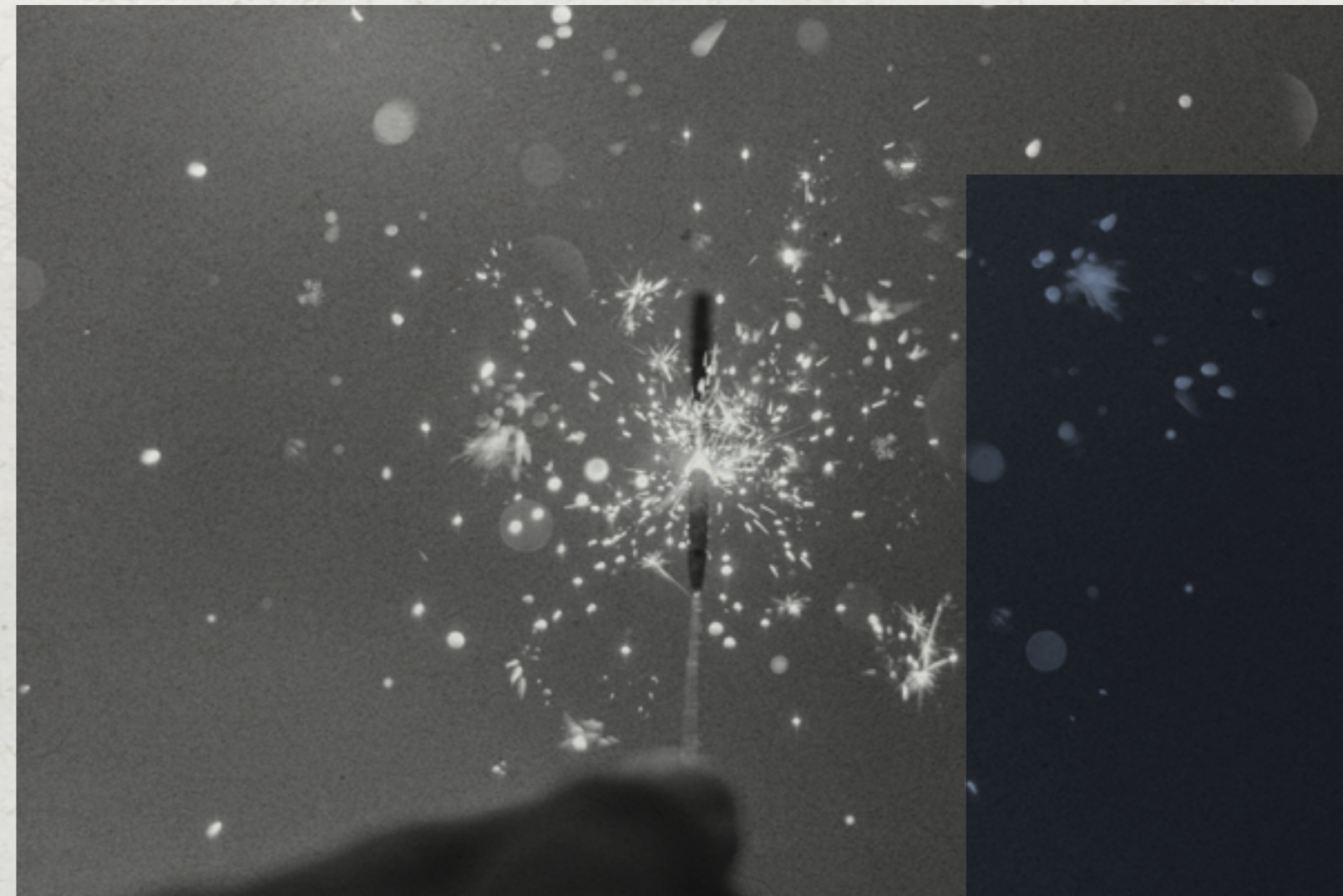
*Larissa Jõgi,  
Estonia*

*knowledge*  
*skills*  
*communication*

**Coming from a modest background, learning is not an accessory, it is an aesthetic of life, full of irises.**

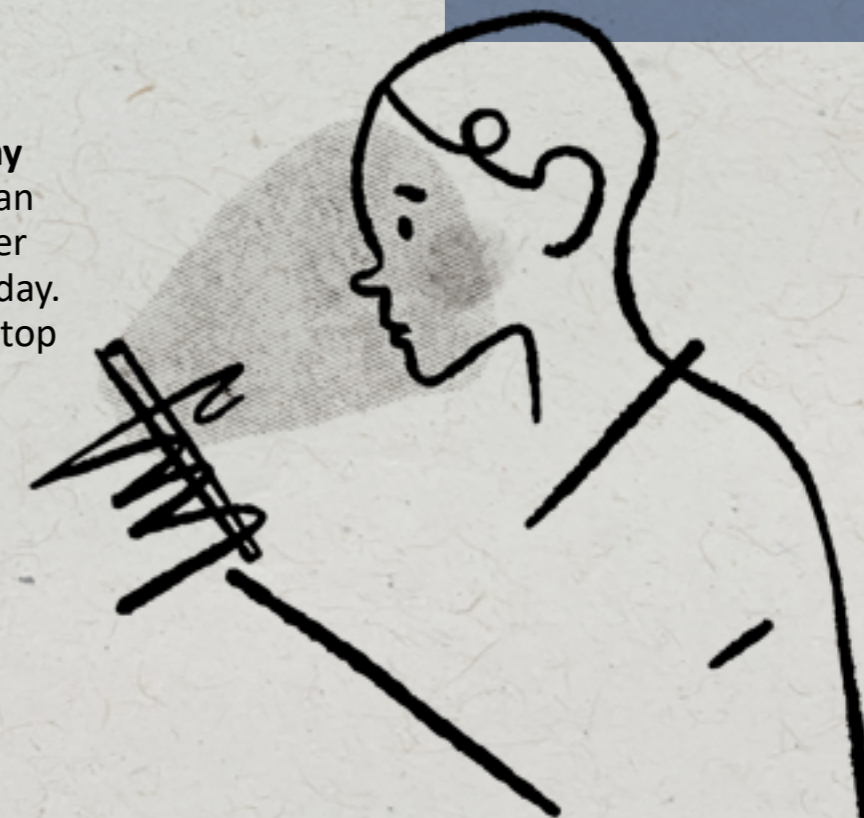
My motivation is to continue seeding the new field of Media and Information Literacy, that keeps evolving as media change. I love unlocking some challenging issues, like explaining the complex mechanisms of disinformation and building counter-narratives.

*Divina Frau-Meigs,  
France*



**Now, it's my turn to follow his example and leave a mark on my students.** To be a teacher who can be loved and remembered for her generosity and consistency one day. That's my dream, and I will not stop until it comes true.

*Chams dha El faghloumi,  
Spain*





**I enjoy when a learner comes to ask for advice** or simply to talk to organise school life better with their suggestions, or comes and gives thanks, as is customary at graduation ceremonies.

*Reet Kikkas,  
Estonia*

In my activities as an educator and as a person, I try to follow the credo: **servicing humanity is the best job in life.** I have such a great job!

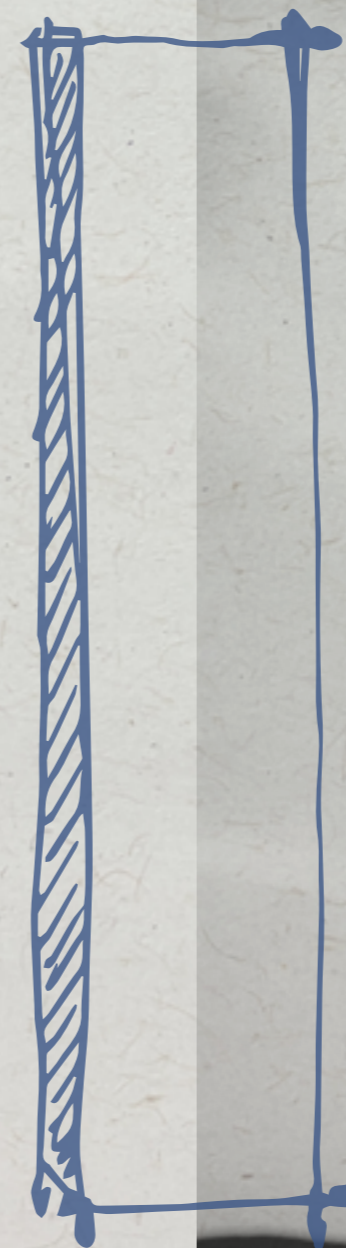
*Elmo Puidet,  
Estonia*

**I catch myself with recognition - I have such a great job when I notice the sparkle in the learner's eyes**, when a topic that was previously extremely difficult or even terrifying for them has suddenly become understandable. Preparing trainings and training materials is also a very nice creative job. If the training goes well and there is good contact with the participants, there is a nice discussion and the learners are active and think along, then I feel that I really enjoy the work of training.

*Siiri Einaste,  
Estonia*

The most important aspect of learning and developing is enjoying the fact that experiencing success is within arm's reach and celebrating this success. **Getting a certificate of acquired skills or any other credentials should be celebrated, but the same goes for your daily progress.**

*Margreet Mook,  
Netherlands*





Being an adult educator can be very empowering. **The biggest contribution, I feel, is that my training gives my learners a chance to explore their creativity as they gain more confidence.** It gives them a channel to express their tastes.

*Benjamina Attard,  
Malta*



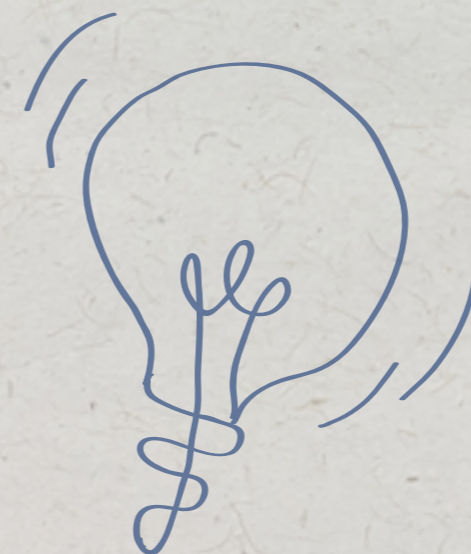
**The more I learn, the more I feel there is more to learn.** I now understand that learning is not a period of life but a part of life.

*Maigi Lepik,  
Estonia*



**Awareness in the learning process** is a strange thing, precisely because we don't only learn consciously.

*Krista Anna Zalāne,  
Latvia*



**This is lifelong learning: continuing to have initiative and curiosity, learning to learn,** returning to the classroom after years, resuming study habits, collaborating with people of other ages and other places.

*Daniel Vallado Borque,  
Spain*



*Great  
Expectations*

**It is enriching to broaden horizons and to discover what connects us.** Coexistence and multiculturalism are nourished and can be found in diversity.

*Daniel Vallado Borque,  
Spain*

**There's a huge need for social change.** Education in the sense of forming, training and development is vital to this.

*Jumbo Klercq,  
Netherlands*



I believe that it is possible to transfer a love for knowledge to people who want to **change their lives for the better.**

*Ivanka Firić,  
Croatia*

Teaching adults is cooperation - as experienced people, **we teach each other.**

*Hälis Värinäe,  
Estonia*



People learn when they're intrinsically motivated, and awareness is another important aspect: what do I want? What skills do I have? **What would I like to achieve?** You must be able to define your needs, so you can actually start working on meeting them.

*Saskia Goutziers,  
Netherlands*



My goal for my future is to bring the message to as many people as possible that they can achieve great things in life and in their career if they understand how to develop their self-awareness. **We must find a way to help people find their calling in life.**

I have discovered that there is high levels of anxiety amongst adult learners and workers. I believe much of this anxiety stems from people not understanding what they want from their lives, they don't understand which direction they should go in to find a sense of purpose in life. When people do not believe their lives have meaning they are prone to feeling anxious, I know all too well how this way of living impacts mental health.

*Patrick Phillips,  
Ireland*

**Our current knowledge is always based on our predecessors,** and it is important that our wisdom becomes a support for future generations who aspire to new heights.

*Maarja Tsimmer,  
Estonia*

I am left with the taste and certainty that **we have to change the learning models.** They need to be more inclusive, more collaborative, and more responsive to both learners and instructors.

*David Lopez,  
France*







I believe learning is a continuous process, but above all that, it's a social process you undertake together. It involves connecting with the outside world, so you can contextualize what you've learned. But learning also is about subtle details; we learn by stepping out of our comfort zones. **I firmly believe not only that everyone has the capacity to learn, but also to teach others.** It's important to make people feel confident that they can learn.

*Jacques Giesbertz,  
Netherlands*

If an adult now, through training, gets the taste and pleasure of learning in their mouth, then I can be satisfied, and from there it will carry on by itself. However, it is worth mentioning that they can also get a **chronic learning disease**. Fortunately, these days it's called lifelong learning.

*Sirje Pree,  
Estonia*



Learning is something very natural for a human, and we learn before we even have a word for this process.

*Krista Anna Zalāne,  
Latvia*

My goal is to promote professional development using modern channels for knowledge transfer.

*Anna Płoska,  
Poland*

I wished that all readers at my library, the people of my community, would have access to the greatest treasures of knowledge. **I see education as an activity which opens up the possibility for everyone to take an active role in life.**

*Vida Juškienė,  
Lithuania*

I have always invited everyone, regardless of their age and experience, not to be afraid to admit that they do not know something, to get involved and learn about things that affect them or are happening around them, because **people can learn everything, get to know the unknown and make it their own.**

*Ērodeja Kirillova,  
Latvia*

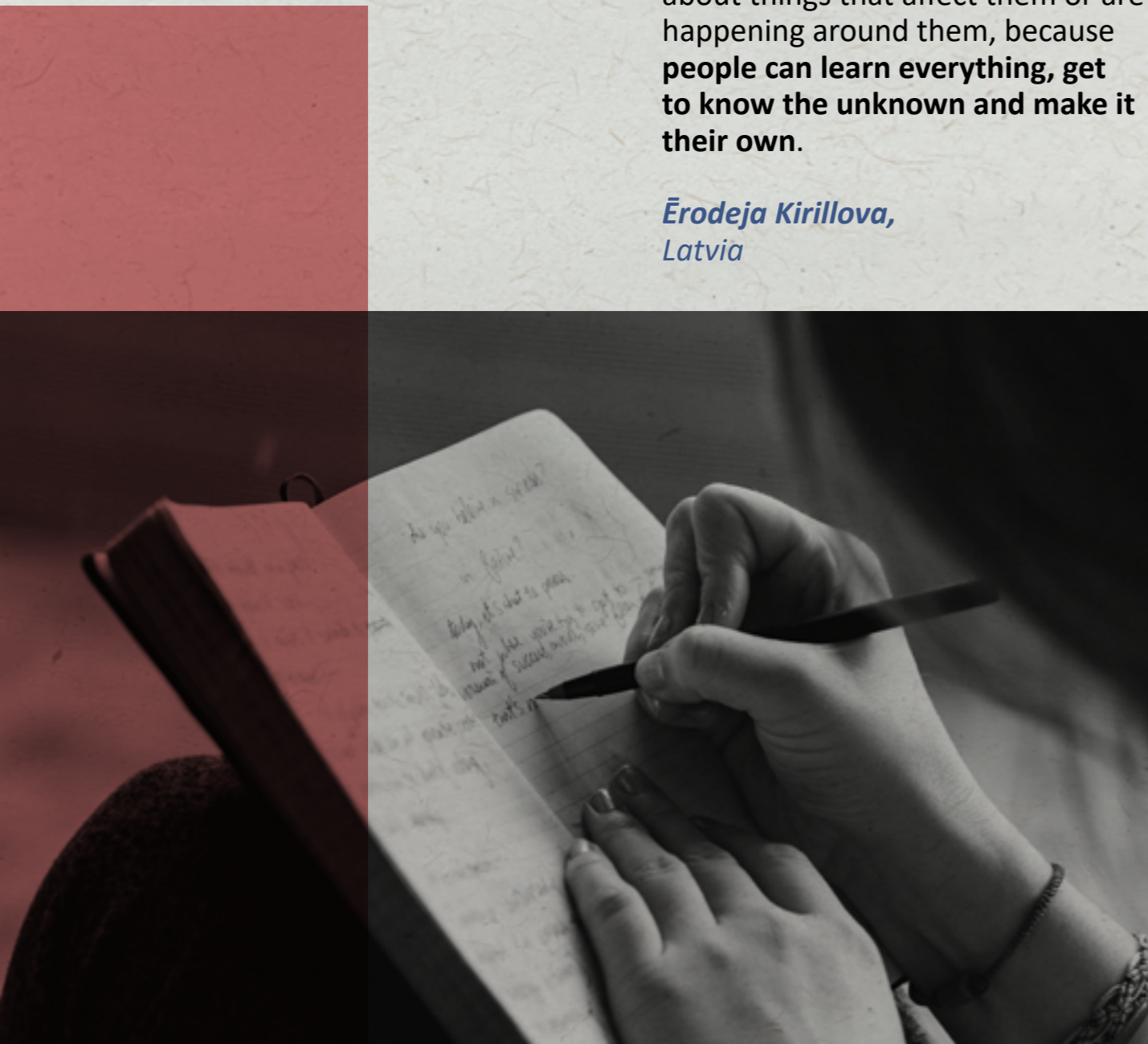


The more I read and study, the more I revisit teachings I had come across earlier in life, I came to the realisation that when you sift this knowledge through the sieve of experience, **its significance will always shift and evolve.**

*Edward Wright,  
Malta*

The man lacking for himself, who has not resolved his existential and psychological mandate, will not have the opportunity to create novelty, but only to **repeat the prejudice of a banal and obvious existing.**

*Davide Staffetta,  
Italy*





**There is a word in Japanese called “ikigai”. It is translated as “worth living”. No matter how old we get, if many adult learners can enjoy Japanese as an intellectual activity and find the worth of living there, nothing would make me happier than this.**

*Hideaki Uenishi,  
Belgium*

**What are my plans for the future? I suppose I’ll decide when the time comes... I’d say there’s still plenty of room for growth.**

*Esther Willemse,  
Netherlands*

**Learning happens everywhere, all the time.**

*Elli Rikkola,  
Finland*





do you believe in success?

in failure?

today, it's about the process

not where you're trying to get to

mission of success, anything else for

that's it

Thinking  
out loud

**I believe in constant education.**

Any action that brings a sense of community and promotes cooperation brings us closer to solving social problems.

**Joanna Stankiewicz,**  
Poland

*I believe in  
constant  
education*

*Sit down, listen carefully and let  
others get to know you*

**Sit down, listen carefully and let  
others get to know you.**

**Aleksandra Chomik,**  
Poland

*Through education, we can influence a  
change of people's mind*



**Through education, we can  
influence a change of people's  
mind** and especially their personal  
attitude and approach to nature and  
management in it.

**Ludmila Kabelová - Michaela  
Vachunová,**  
Czech Republic

*Change begins in you.  
learn and conquer the  
world!*

I love learning and developing my  
skills, and I hope to be able to pass  
that passion on to others.  
**Change begins in you: learn and  
conquer the world!**

**Paula Duarte,**  
Portugal



*Keep on discovering  
new worlds*

**Keep on discovering new worlds.**

**Daniel Vallado Borque,  
Spain**

**Without music, life would be a  
mistake.**

**Roseline Le Squère,  
France**

*Without music, life  
would be a mistake*

Participatory methods.  
Understanding individual and group  
challenges. Peer learning education.  
**Learning communities.**

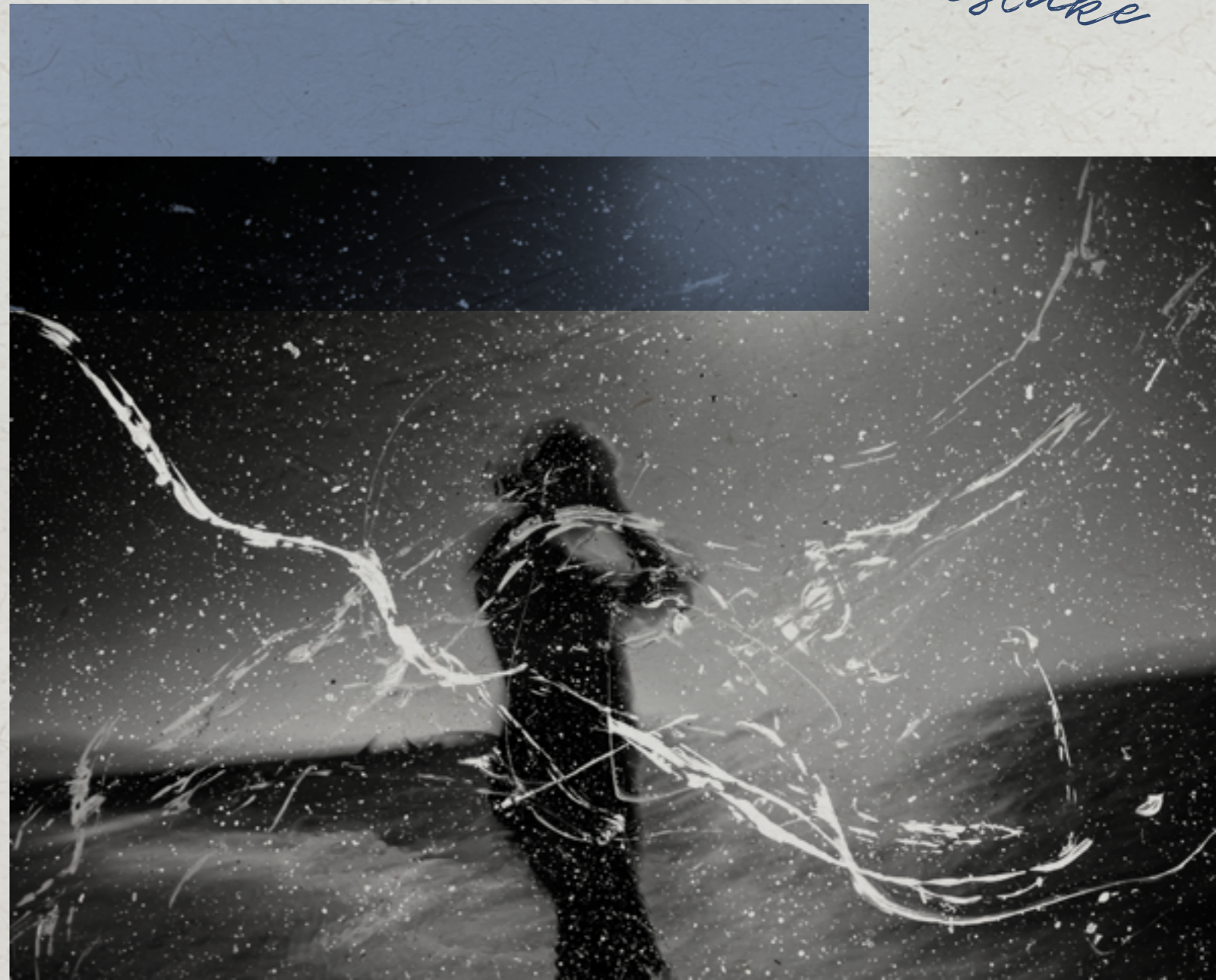
**David Lopez,  
France**

*You learn by doing*

**You learn by doing.**

**Stella Suojanen,  
Finland**

*Participatory methods.  
Understanding individual  
and group challenges. Peer  
learning education. Learning  
communities*





*To notice and support the talent of others, one must first notice and develop one's own talents*

The development of an individual's abilities and talents is not something that is the privilege of the chosen ones; this opportunity must be created for everyone throughout life. **To notice and support the talent of others, one must first notice and develop one's own talents.**

**Halliki Põlda,**  
Estonia

*The paradigm defines. Paradigm can be applied the most. Theories are applicable in half of the cases and specific tips can be used very rarely.*



**The paradigm defines.** Paradigm can be applied the most. Theories are applicable in half of the cases and specific tips can be used very rarely.

**Kaido Vestberg,**  
Estonia

**They say a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but it's not one half so bad as a lot of ignorance** ("stolen" from Terry Pratchett).

**Camila Rodrigues,**  
Portugal

ALE has taught me I will never graduate from this everlasting lifelong learning phase, **there is always something new to explore and learn.**

**Guðfinna Harðardóttir,**  
Iceland

*there is always something new to explore and learn*

**A daily dose of motivation, positive attitude, and a willingness to learn shapes new value and meaning in both our personal and professional life.**

**Željka Ciler,**  
Croatia

*A daily dose of motivation, positive attitude, and a willingness to learn shapes new value and meaning in both our personal and professional life*



*The only risk you take is that of succeeding*

**The only risk you take is that of succeeding.**

**Thierry Ardouin,**  
France





*Learning is  
proof that we  
exist and live!*

**Learning is proof that we exist  
and live!**

**Olivera Markovic,  
Montenegro**

**Learning is like breathing.** You learn always and everywhere, from each other, from nature. It's good to regularly consider: what have I learned today?

**Lidwien Vos de Wael,  
Netherlands**

*You learn always and everywhere, from  
each other, from nature.  
...what have I learned today?*



*breathe*

*First I learn to get  
to know and become  
aware of myself then I  
start to educate others*

**First I learn to get to know and  
become aware of myself then I start  
to educate others.**

**Margus Maripu,  
Estonia**

**By teaching others, I improve  
myself.**

**Loreta Cigelskienė,  
Lithuania**

*By teaching  
others, I improve  
myself.*



*The Authors*

from the EPALE Community

## Belgium



### Hideaki Uenishi

People have a treasure called "curiosity" in their hearts



### Liesbeth De Donder

An optimal learning climate needs an optimal living climate



### Lut Lippeveld

More opportunities to learn in prison



### Siegfried Coudenys

A new start, new hope

## Croatia



### Alen Stranjik

Everything is possible with education



### Ivanka Firić

Life teaches us to be patient



### Željka Ciler

Encouragement of independence and creativity in everyday work

## Czech Republic



### Kateřina Pávková

Volunteering and civic activities in the field of heritage preservation



### Ludmila Kabelová - Michaela Vachunová

Friendship is the only glue that will ever hold the world together



## Estonia



### Aile Nõupuu

I also evolve due to my adult learners



### Elmo Puidet

Serving humanity is the best job in life



### Hälis Värिमäe

The Montessori pedagogy method



### Halliki Põlda

Self-directed, hardworking, curious, and motivated



### Helge Alt

Pushing the boundaries in the field of cleaning



### Helina Kibar

Learn from everyday life

**Kadi Kass**

*Coping with insecurity by increasing knowledge*

**Kaido Vestberg**

*Laziness can be a driving force*

**Kristina Such**

*Supporting creativity and talent*

**Siiri Einaste**

*The sparkle in the learner's eyes*

**Sirje Pree**

*A chronic learning disease called lifelong learning*

**Uno Kuller**

*Learning with motivational coercion*

**Larissa Jõgi**

*Being a trainer is a process of identity*

**Maarja Tsimmer**

*The magic of the training industry lies in its constant improvement*

**Maigi Lepik**

*Learning is not a period of life but a part of life*

**Viibeke Turba**

*Curious people are happy people*

**Margus Maripu**

*Who is teaching and who is learning?*

**Martti Kivi**

*Happy to contribute to someone's development*

**Reet Kikkas**

*There is still something to learn!*

*Finland*

**Elli Rikkola**

*Learning new things is fundamental to being human*

**Stella Suojanen**

*Everything I learned inspired me to learn more*

## France



**David Lopez**

*We have to change the learning models*



**Divina Frau-Meigs**

*The complex mechanisms of disinformation*



**Roseline Le Squère**

*Latin America and the EU, common challenges*



**Sophie Alex-Bacquer**

*Training and solutions for people in vulnerable situations*



**Thierry Ardouin**

*I am a true product of lifelong learning*

## Greece



**Georgia Ropi**

*The potential of transnational cooperation*

## Iceland



**Guðfinna Harðardóttir**

*Valuable workforce for the public sector*

## Ireland



**Patrick Phillips**

*Helping people find a path that will bring a sense of purpose and meaning*

## Italy



**Davide Staffetta**

*The individual's maturation must start from their subjectivity*



**Francesco D'Errico**

*Social work and teaching to support adults of foreign origin*



**Mariadaniela Sfarra**

*Knowing one's hidden talents and learning to value them*



**Sergio Cabigiosu**

*Sharing is more profitable than keeping to oneself*



**Sulayman Camara**

*Helping others to integrate, engage and seek their own way*



**Wilma Greco**

*Between resilience and freedom*

## Latvia



**Agnese Lejniece**

*Taking steps towards self-improvement*



**Ērodeja Kirillova**

*Accept small challenges*



**Krista Anna Zalāne**

*Learning is a big part of my personal identity*

## Lithuania



**Daiva Nakrošienė**

*Our sustainability journey into Christmas*



**Loreta Cigelskienė**

*By teaching others, I improve myself*



**Mindaugas Trepeikis**

*Volunteering at the football club*



**Vida Juškienė**

*The greatest treasures of knowledge*

## Malta



**Benjamina Attard**

*Exploring creativity through basic sewing skills*



**Edward Wright**

*Learning can liberate the mind and the spirit*

## Montenegro



**Andrijana Pavićević**

*Education is my life!*



**Jelena Bojovic**

*Chalk, sponge and a storage room door in the kitchen*



**Marica Ognjenovic**

*The comfort zone to which I strive to belong*



**Olivera Markovic**

*Knowledge isn't about knowing, but about sharing!*



**Saša Klikovac**

*Learning is an irreversible process of change*



**Snežana Kršikapa**

*Learning makes people feel happy and accomplished*

## Netherlands



**Ann Doherty**

*The joy of growing your own food*



**Esther Willemse**

*Passion for lifelong learning and development*



**Jacques Giesbertz**

*Everyone has the capacity to learn*



**Margreet Mook**

*Creating a labour market that includes everyone*



**Mazen Ba-baeer**

*The importance lies in the connections*



**Saskia Goutziers**

*Vitality is key*



**Jumbo Klercq**

*Education, training and development are indispensable for social change*



**Lianne Knobel**

*Cooperation in adult education is vital*



**Lidwien Vos de Wael**

*Learning by doing and observing with an open mind*



**Sylvia de Groot Heupner**

*Everyone is on their own learning journey*



**Grethe Haugøy**

*Education and training for social and economic participation for all*

## Poland



**Aleksandra Chomik**

*First, you look into one another's eyes, smile and talk*



**Anna Płoska**

*Educate, inspire and motivate career counsellors*



**Joanna Stankiewicz**

*Fostering a sense of community*



**Lidia Pokrzycka**

*Learning methods can never be boring*



**Maria Masternak**

*Together, we can take a fresh look at something we think we know*



**Olena Bulgakova**

*Closeness and support to Ukrainian refugees*

## Portugal

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**Camila Rodrigues**

*Supporting female entrepreneurship*



**Paula Duarte**

*Mind, Body & Soul*



**Raquel Lorenzo**

*The values that move me*

## Slovenia

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**Raquel Pelicano**

*Learning expands our world*



**Sandra Félix**

*Self-confidence and how to develop it*



**Darijan Novak**

*A small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world*

## Spain

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**Chams dha El faghloumi**

*When to start over is to study again*



**Daniel Vallado Borque**

*Teaching and learning from talent, solidarity and spirit*



**Olga Pérez Herrero**

*Building bridges to others and new possible worlds*

*Join us!*



**EPALE**

Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe



## CONTACT US

For more information please consult our website where you will find details on upcoming events and publications on how to apply for funding.

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For more information about EPALE please consult our website:

[epale.ec.europa.eu/en](http://epale.ec.europa.eu/en)

