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XXIAdults

Adaptation of the adult educational system to the XXI Century

The Good Practices Template

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Name of the Good Practice
EduSenior – Improving the Quality of Senior Education in Gdańsk

Summary of the Practice Brief, easy-to-understand summary: What is the practice, for whom, and for what purpose?
EduSenior is an educational initiative developed by the NOVA Foundation in Gdańsk, Poland, aimed at improving the quality of non-formal education for older adults. The project focused on strengthening the competences of adult educators and creating inclusive learning opportunities for seniors, especially in the field of digital and civic competences. Through international cooperation with the Norwegian partner Bjerkaker LearningLab, the project introduced the "study circle" methodology into local community centres. It included training and job shadowing in Norway, testing educational methods with senior groups, and producing a practical guide and training modules for other adult education providers. The practice addressed the growing need for meaningful, participatory learning opportunities for older adults and promoted lifelong learning in a supportive, community-based environment.

Description of the Practice – min. 2000 characters
1) Context / Background What was the initial need or problem? Who was the target group? Was it part of a larger programme or project?
The EduSenior project was developed to address the growing need for high-quality and inclusive education for older adults in Gdańsk, Poland. Many senior citizens experience digital exclusion and lack access to relevant, empowering learning opportunities. At the same time, educators working with this group often lack appropriate tools and methods to engage older learners effectively, especially in non-formal environments. The project focused on two target groups: educators and facilitators working with seniors in community settings, and older adults (60+), who participated in pilot learning activities. *EduSenior* was part of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014–2021, implemented under the "Active Citizens – Regional Fund" programme. It was led by the NOVA Foundation (Poland), in partnership with Bjerkaker LearningLab (Norway). Locally, it was carried out in community centres and senior clubs in Gdańsk, such as "Wzgórze Radości".

The project lasted from January 2022 to December 2023. It introduced the "study circle" method, a participatory Scandinavian learning approach based on dialogue, equality, and learner initiative. Educators took part in international mobility activities in Norway (job shadowing and training), and then applied what they learned in local pilot groups with seniors.

EduSenior also filled a gap in Polish-language resources for senior education by developing a practical guidebook for educators and training modules tested and refined with real participants.

These materials supported a more engaging, respectful and inclusive learning environment for older adults, and remain publicly available.

In short, *EduSenior* responded to the digital and social needs of older learners by empowering educators and creating sustainable tools and methods for senior education.

2) Objectives

What were the goals of the practice?
What did it aim to improve or change?

The main goal of *the EduSenior* project was to improve the quality of non-formal education for older adults by strengthening the competences of the educators who work with them. The initiative aimed to make adult education for seniors more inclusive, participatory, and better suited to their needs—especially in the area of digital and civic competences.

More specifically, *EduSenior* aimed to:

1. Empower educators and facilitators by providing them with new tools, knowledge, and methods to support senior learners more effectively,
2. Introduce and adapt the “study circle” methodology to the Polish context, as an inclusive, low-threshold approach to senior learning,
3. Increase the engagement and self-confidence of older adults, especially those at risk of digital exclusion,
4. Create practical resources (guidebook and training modules) that can be used by other adult education providers in Poland and beyond,
5. Promote international cooperation and exchange of good practices between Poland and Norway in the field of senior education.

The project sought to change the traditional, often top-down approach to senior education by making it more dialogic, learner-centred, and responsive to the real needs of older people.

3) Implementation / Methodology

How was the practice carried out step by step?
What activities or methods were used?

How long did it take?

The EduSenior project was implemented over a two-year period from January 2022 to December 2023. It began with identifying the needs of educators and older learners through internal consultations and partner collaboration. Based on this, the project team designed a structure combining international mobility, local pilot testing, and the development of practical educational resources.

One of the key steps was the international partnership with Bjerkaker LearningLab from Norway, which provided expertise in participatory adult education. As part of this collaboration, a group of Polish adult educators and facilitators took part in mobility activities in Norway. These included job shadowing and training focused on the "study circle" methodology—a learner-led, discussion-based approach that has proven effective in senior education in Scandinavia.

After returning from Norway, the participating educators adapted the study circle method to the Polish context and tested it in three local community centres in Gdańsk, working with groups of senior learners. Each pilot group focused on building digital and social competences, encouraging active participation, and creating a safe, respectful learning space.

Throughout the project, the team also worked on developing practical materials for future use. These included a guidebook for senior educators, as well as a set of training modules that covered key topics such as digital skills, civic engagement, and intergenerational cooperation. The materials were based on real experiences from the pilot activities and were adjusted to reflect the feedback of both educators and senior participants.

In the final stage of the project, the results were presented at a dissemination event in Gdańsk, where educators, NGO representatives, and local authorities were invited to learn about the methodology and receive the materials. All resources were made publicly available for further use in other institutions working with older adults.

4) Results / Outcomes

What were the concrete results?

How did the practice impact the participants?

The EduSenior project generated several tangible and sustainable results that contributed to improving the quality of senior education in Poland.

One of the key outcomes was the capacity building of ten adult educators and facilitators, who participated in international mobility activities in Norway. Through job shadowing and training on the "study circle" methodology, they gained new pedagogical insights and practical skills, which were later applied in local learning environments.

The newly acquired competences were used in three community centres in Gdańsk, where educators tested and adapted the study circle approach in small groups with around 30 senior participants. These pilot sessions helped validate the method's effectiveness in promoting open dialogue, peer learning, and

learner empowerment. Seniors who took part reported increased self-confidence, stronger motivation to learn, and a greater sense of belonging to a learning community.

A major output of the project was the development of a practical guidebook for educators and a set of training modules tailored to the needs of older adults. These materials covered digital competences, civic participation, intergenerational communication, and learning strategies for seniors. The resources were based on real-life experiences from the pilot phase and adjusted in response to feedback from both educators and senior learners.

The project also produced a catalogue of good practices in senior education, shared through an open dissemination event in Gdańsk. This event gathered educators, NGO representatives, and local authorities and facilitated the transfer of knowledge and methods developed during the project.

As a result, *EduSenior* contributed to reducing educational and digital exclusion among older adults, empowered local educators with new tools and international inspiration, and provided practical, replicable resources for use across the adult education sector. The project's outcomes continue to support the work of other institutions in Poland and beyond.

5) Participants' Stories – optional

Short quotes, personal reflections or experiences shared by participant

6) Success Factors

What made the practice effective or innovative?
Were there any unique or creative elements?

Several factors contributed to the success and effectiveness of *the EduSenior project*. First and foremost, the strong international partnership between the NOVA Foundation and Bjerkaker LearningLab brought valuable expertise and inspiration. The Norwegian partner's long-standing experience in participatory adult education, especially with the study circle methodology, provided a solid foundation for adapting this approach to the Polish context.

Another key factor was the clear focus on both educators and learners. By investing in the professional development of facilitators first, the project ensured that the educational activities for seniors would be well-designed, inclusive, and effective. The combination of international training and local implementation created a dynamic learning loop that benefited both groups.

The use of the study circle methodology itself was also a success factor. Its emphasis on dialogue, equality, and group-led learning resonated with older adults, many of whom felt more engaged and respected in this

Overall, *EduSenior* demonstrates that with proper preparation and commitment, inclusive and empowering education for older adults is possible in any community.

8) Tips / Implementation Advice – optional

Checklists, lessons, or advice for those wishing to implement the practice.

Based on *the EduSenior* experience, the following tips may help others successfully implement a similar practice:

1. Start with the facilitators.
   Invest in short training or orientation sessions to help educators understand the study circle approach and develop confidence in leading participatory learning groups.
2. Keep groups small and consistent.
   Ideally, 6–10 participants per circle, meeting regularly. This builds trust, group identity, and safe conditions for peer exchange.
3. Let learners choose topics.
   Whenever possible, allow participants to shape the direction of the circle. This improves engagement and gives seniors a sense of ownership over the learning process.
4. Use everyday language and real-life examples.
   Avoid jargon. Tailor the materials and conversations to seniors' needs, experiences, and comfort levels.
5. Provide printed materials.
   Some participants may not use digital tools confidently; printed worksheets or summaries can support learning and encourage reflection at home.
6. Focus on process over performance.
   The value of the study circle lies in discussion, mutual support, and personal development—not in reaching formal learning outcomes.
7. Encourage facilitators to reflect.
   After each session, facilitators should note what worked, what didn't, and what could be improved. This helps refine their practice and adapt the method locally.
8. Use the EduSenior guidebook and modules.
   They offer tested structures, questions, and advice, and can easily be adapted to different topics or groups.

By following these simple tips, institutions can create inclusive and meaningful learning environments for older adults, even with limited resources.

9) Lessons Learned - optional

Biggest surprises, obstacles or key takeaways during implementation.

10) Photos illustrating the described practice

Please attach at least 3 photos related to the described good practice

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Source: Fundacja NOVA – EduSenior project page: https://fundacjanova.org.pl/portfolio_page/edusenior/

PRACTICE PROFILE – CLASSIFICATION CHECKLIST

Please tick all categories that apply to your described practice. You may choose more than one.

TYPE OF THE PRACTICE	
☒	Learning by doing
☒	Intergenerational learning
☐	Community-based learning
☐	Digital / blended learning
☒	Peer learning
☐	Mentoring / coaching
☐	Cultural / creative approaches
☒	Collaborative / partner-based
☐	Other (specify):
TARGET GROUP	
☐	Adults with low qualifications
☐	NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)
☐	Migrants / Refugees
☒	Older adults
☐	Women
☐	People with disabilities
☐	Other vulnerable groups
☐	General adult population
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	
☐	Formal
☒	Non-formal
☒	Informal
SKILLS / COMPETENCES DEVELOPED	
☐	Literacy (reading, writing, comprehension)
☐	Numeracy (maths, logical thinking)
☒	Digital skills
☐	STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics)
☒	Personal, social and learning to learn
☒	Civic competences
☐	Entrepreneurship
☐	Cultural awareness and expression
☐	Language skills
☒	Job-related / vocational skills

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☐	Green competences
☐	Other (specify):
POTENTIAL USERS	
☒	Teachers / Educators
☐	Administrative staff
☐	School / Centre management
☐	Policy makers / Public administration
☒	NGOs / Community organizations
☐	Other (specify):

Glossary of Categories (Explanation of Checklist Items)

Type of the Practice

- Learning by doing – learning through hands-on activities, practice-based methods such as workshops or real tasks.
- Intergenerational learning – activities involving participants from different age groups learning from each other.
- Community-based learning – learning that takes place within the local community, often through real-life engagement.
- Digital / blended learning – education using digital tools (online), or a mix of online and face-to-face methods.
- Peer learning – learning among participants of similar status or experience, supporting each other.
- Mentoring / coaching – one-to-one support from a more experienced person to help learning and personal growth.
- Cultural / creative approaches – use of arts, music, theatre, storytelling etc. as learning tools.
- Collaborative / partner-based – practices involving cooperation between organisations or groups.
- Other (specify) – any other method not listed above.

Target Group

- Adults with low qualifications – adults who have low levels of formal education or basic skills.
- NEETs – people Not in Education, Employment, or Training (often young adults).
- Migrants / Refugees – individuals who moved from another country, often facing integration challenges.
- Older adults – Adults aged 65+
- Women – practices specifically addressing women's needs.

- People with disabilities – individuals with physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental health disabilities.
- Other vulnerable groups – groups at risk of exclusion (e.g. long-term unemployed, homeless).
- General adult population – average adults not in specific categories.

Learning Environment

- Formal – learning within official education systems, certified courses (e.g. schools, universities).
- Non-formal – organised learning outside the formal system (e.g. workshops, community training).
- Informal – learning through everyday experiences, without a structured course (e.g. volunteering, family).

Skills / Competences Developed

- Literacy – reading, writing, and understanding texts (including functional texts like forms).
- Numeracy – using mathematics and logical reasoning.
- Digital skills – using digital tools e.g. CV creation, online tools, online platforms.
- STEM – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- Personal, social and learning to learn – self-awareness, motivation, teamwork, lifelong learning skills.
- Civic competences – active citizenship, understanding of democracy and social responsibilities.
- Entrepreneurship – creativity, innovation, project management, risk-taking.
- Cultural awareness and expression – appreciation and creation of cultural content (e.g. arts, music).
- Language skills – ability to communicate in one or more foreign languages.
- Job-related / vocational skills – practical skills useful in specific jobs or professions.
- Green competences – knowledge and behaviours supporting sustainability and environmental care.
- Other – any other skills developed (please specify).

Potential users – groups who could benefit from applying, adapting, or being inspired by this practice in their work context.

Note: These categories follow EU frameworks such as the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018), the Action Plan on Basic Skills (2025) and the Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025 – Glossary

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