XXIAdults

Adaptation of the adult educational system to the XXI Century

2024-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000245715

Training Guide

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Executive Summary

XXI ADULTS – Adaptation of the adult educational system to the XXI Century is a European cooperation project that aims to modernise adult education and make it more inclusive, creative, and digitally oriented. The project responds to the challenges of contemporary Europe — digital transformation, ageing populations, migration, and the need for social participation — by identifying innovative approaches that help adults learn and adapt effectively.

Based on surveys with adult learners, educators, managers, and administrative staff, as well as the analysis of over thirty good practices collected across partner countries, the project developed a Training Guide and an Educational Platform to support adult educators in their daily work.

The *Training Guide* combines research, theory, and practice. It presents key approaches in adult education and offers four thematic modules focused on digital learning, creativity, social and intergenerational cooperation, and inclusion.

This Guide serves as a bridge between knowledge and application — a practical tool that supports educators and learning centres in implementing innovative solutions. It also provides the foundation for the next stages of the project: the piloting phase and the cooperation with adult education centres across Europe.

Introduction

About the project

XXI ADULTS – Adaptation of the adult educational system to the XXI Century is a European cooperation project (KA220-ADU) that aims to adapt adult education to the new social, digital, and economic realities of the 21st century.

Its main goal is to support the modernisation of adult education systems by identifying, analysing, and promoting innovative methods and tools that make learning more inclusive, creative, and digital. The project focuses on the development of a shared educational model that improves access to high-quality learning opportunities for adults, while strengthening cooperation among institutions across Europe.

The project addresses the needs of:

- Adult learners, including seniors and vulnerable groups,
- Educators and trainers, who are key to ensuring innovation in learning,
- Managers and administrative staff in adult education institutions, who coordinate and shape the educational process.

XXI Adults contributes to key European strategies such as the European Skills Agenda and the European Education Area 2025, promoting lifelong learning, inclusion, and active participation in society.

Methodology

The Training Guide was developed as part of a structured process that reflects the project's stages and objectives.

1. Survey and needs analysis – Partners conducted surveys among learners (especially seniors), educators, managers, and administrative staff to better understand their learning needs, motivations, and barriers. These findings guided the project's direction and the content of this Guide.
2. Mapping of good practices – Each partner identified and described examples of successful initiatives in adult education, using a shared template. The result is a collection of more than thirty Good Practices representing diverse contexts and approaches.
3. Analysis and synthesis – The research data and good practices were analysed to identify effective approaches and methodologies that could serve as a foundation for a modern adult education model.
4. Creation of the Training Guide – This Guide translates the results of research and mapping into a structured, practical tool for educators and managers. It is part of a broader process that includes:
    - the development of an Educational Platform, and
    - the selection of Adult Education Centres ready to cooperate in testing and implementing project results during the piloting phase.

This methodology ensures that the Guide is based on both evidence and real-life experience, connecting European policy with practical innovation.

Purpose of the Guide

The Training Guide serves as a bridge between research and practice. It provides a comprehensive overview of innovative approaches and offers concrete examples and tools that can be adapted in adult learning contexts.

Its specific aims are to:

- present key challenges and opportunities in adult education,
- promote inclusive and creative methods that reflect real learner needs,
- provide inspiration and guidance for adult educators and institutions,
- and support future cooperation with adult education centres involved in piloting and implementation.

By combining research, practice, and digital tools, the Guide contributes to building an adaptable and sustainable model of adult education for the 21st century.

How to Read the Guide

The Training Guide is structured in a logical and accessible way, allowing readers to explore topics according to their needs.

1. Theoretical Framework – outlines the European context of adult education and the main challenges in today's learning landscape.
2. Approaches in Adult Education – introduces the main teaching and learning approaches identified during research and analysis.
3. Thematic Modules – four modules focused on the key areas of the project:
    - Digital Learning
    - Creativity and Innovation
    - Social and Intergenerational Learning
    - Inclusion

Each module includes:

- Introduction & Rationale
- What learners will learn / Skills & Competences gained
- Theoretical Justification
- Good Practices
- Symbolic image / visual

The Guide can be read as a whole or explored by individual modules. Its content will also be transferred to an interactive Educational Platform, where educators and learning centres will find

summaries, examples, and “how to implement” checklists — supporting the next phase of the project: testing and cooperation with selected adult education centres.

Theoretical Framework

Overview of Adult Education in Europe

Adult education in Europe is undergoing profound transformation. The 21st century has reshaped how people live, work, and learn: technology evolves faster than educational systems, populations are ageing, and migration and mobility are redefining communities. In this landscape, adult learning must be more than a space for basic skills—it must become a driver of participation, resilience, and digital inclusion.

The XXI Adults project emerges as a direct response to these realities. It recognizes that digitalization is not simply a technical process but a social transition that affects every aspect of life—from employability and civic participation to communication and cultural identity. For adults, the ability to navigate digital environments is now as essential as reading or numeracy once were. Yet digital competence alone is not enough; adults also need the confidence, critical thinking, and adaptability to keep learning throughout life.

European and national strategies (such as the European Skills Agenda, Digital Education Action Plan, and the Council Recommendation on Lifelong Learning) emphasise that education systems must equip adults with the competences to engage fully in the digital and green transitions. XXI Adults contributes to these goals by helping adult education centres and their staff translate policy into practice—building local capacity through digital tools, intergenerational collaboration, and community partnerships.

The project's foundation is collaboration between learners, educators, and institutions. Each plays a distinct but interconnected role:

- Learners seek opportunities to strengthen digital confidence and autonomy.
- Educators and managers act as facilitators of change, requiring continuous professional development.
- Public administrations provide the structural conditions—policies, resources, and leadership—that enable sustainable innovation.

In parallel, the mapping of centres and good practices across partner countries demonstrates that innovation is already taking root. Community-based organizations in Spain and Poland integrate cultural and creative learning into digital programmes; ICT-focused centres in Greece and Portugal introduce blended formats and AI-supported learning; grassroots initiatives in Bosnia & Herzegovina promote social and digital inclusion among vulnerable groups. These examples show that effective adult education combines technology with human connection, creating learning spaces that are flexible, inclusive, and meaningful.

Therefore, the rationale of XXI Adults is twofold:

1. To strengthen digital competence as a foundation for personal and professional fulfilment.
2. To redefine adult education as an ecosystem of lifelong, intergenerational, and community – based learning capable of responding to continuous change.

This theoretical framework underpins the Guide: it situates adult education within the broader context of societal transformation and provides a conceptual bridge to the pedagogical approaches and modules that follow.

Key challenges in Adult Education today

Adult education in Europe is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of inclusion, active citizenship, and innovation. Yet despite strong policy support, the field continues to face persistent and emerging challenges that influence how adults learn and how centres, educators, and administrations respond. These challenges are interconnected—technological, institutional, and human—and addressing them requires both strategic vision and flexible, local action.

1. **The Expanding Digital Divide**

Digitalization creates opportunities but also new inequalities. Many adults have integrated technology into their daily routines, yet others remain excluded due to limited access, skills, or confidence. This divide is not only technical but social: it reflects age, education, income, and geography. Urban learners often benefit from access to digital infrastructure, while rural or disadvantaged communities may rely on outdated devices or weak connectivity.

Adult education must therefore ensure equal opportunities for digital participation, providing not only training but also motivation, emotional support, and access to the necessary tools. Bridging the divide is about empowerment—helping every adult become an active digital citizen, not a passive consumer.

2. **Inclusivity and Diversity**

European societies are becoming more diverse through migration, ageing, and changing family structures. Adult learning systems must respond to this by creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Seniors, migrants, low-skilled adults, and people with disabilities often face the greatest obstacles in accessing digital or lifelong learning. Overcoming these barriers requires personalized learning paths, intergenerational exchange, and community-based approaches that make education relevant and accessible to all. Inclusivity also means tackling the digital gender gap and ensuring that all adults, regardless of background, can engage confidently with technology and society.

3. **Educator Roles and Professional Development**

Educators are at the centre of transformation. They are no longer just transmitters of knowledge but facilitators, mentors, and digital guides. However, many still lack structured opportunities for professional development. The transition to blended and online learning exposed gaps in digital pedagogy, classroom management in virtual environments, and assessment of digital competences. Teachers need ongoing, practice-oriented training that supports experimentation with new methods, fosters peer learning, and provides recognition for digital teaching competences. Building educators' confidence and resilience is key to enabling change at the institutional level.

4. Institutional and Systemic Barriers

Adult education centres and training institutions often operate under limited funding, fragmented governance, and rigid administrative frameworks. While digitalization is a strategic priority at the European level, local centres frequently struggle to translate policy goals into action. Many depend on project-based funding, which, although innovative, can make long-term planning difficult. A sustainable adult education system requires coordinated leadership, consistent investment, and supportive policies that align infrastructure, training, and inclusion goals. Strengthening the connection between public administrations and centres is essential for creating a stable environment for innovation.

5. Learning Culture and Motivation

Adult learners differ fundamentally from younger students: they bring experience, responsibilities, and expectations. They value relevance, flexibility, and immediate applicability of knowledge. The rise of hybrid and microlearning models shows that adults prefer short, modular, hands-on learning supported by digital tools. However, maintaining motivation remains a challenge, especially when adults face time constraints or lack confidence.

To engage adults effectively, learning must be designed as a supportive and participatory process—one that recognizes their previous experiences, offers visible progress (such as certificates or micro-credentials), and builds self-efficacy through practical success.

A Call for Integrated Action

These challenges cannot be solved by individual actors alone. Bridging the digital divide, fostering inclusion, and professionalizing educators requires collaboration among learners, centres, and administrations. The XXI Adults project positions adult education as an interconnected ecosystem—where each level supports the others in building digital competence, confidence, and community.

The next chapters of this Guide therefore explore the pedagogical approaches and training modules that offer practical ways to respond to these challenges—combining digital innovation with human connection, inclusivity, and lifelong learning.

Approaches in Adult Education

Learning by Doing

Learning by doing" is an educational theory that emphasises active engagement, hands-on experience, and task-oriented learning. Instead of passively receiving information through lectures or reading, the learner actively participates in practical, real-world tasks and activities.

Key aspects of learning by doing include:

- Hands-on experience
- Active engagement
- Learning from mistakes
- Reflection
- Contextual learning

Example of Good Practice

Digital Literacy Circles for Older Adults

Summary of the Practice

*Digital Literacy Circles for Older Adult*s is a peer-led, community-based initiative designed to improve essential digital skills among adults aged 50–75. It aims to address the digital divide by promoting practical, confidence-building learning in a supportive and non-formal setting. The practice supports the broader goals of the Adult Education by empowering vulnerable populations with 21st-century digital skills, helping to improve their quality of life and employment potential.

Objectives

- Equip older adults with practical digital skills (e.g., using email, accessing government portals, online safety, videoing).
- Reduce digital exclusion and promote independence.
- Foster social connection and community engagement through collaborative learning.
- Support adult education centres in modernizing their outreach and inclusivity strategies.

Methodology

Step-by-Step:

- Recruitment: Local education centres invited older adults and community volunteers to participate.
- Training of facilitators: Volunteers (including younger adults and trained educators) received a short orientation on adult learning principles and digital tools.

- Circle formation: Small groups (6–10 participants) were formed, meeting weekly for 90-minute sessions over 6 weeks.
- Content customization: Each group chose topics relevant to their needs (e.g., mobile phone basics, online banking, video calls, video creation).
- Learning by doing: Sessions were hands-on, using real-life tasks (e.g., creating email accounts, booking appointments, making small videos).
- Peer support: Group members helped each other, and facilitators provided guidance when necessary.
- Feedback loop: Mid- and post-programme evaluations helped improve future sessions.

Outcomes

- Over 100 older adults across 3 countries improved their digital skills.
- Participants reported increased confidence in using smartphones, email, and digital services.
- Several participants re-entered part-time work or began volunteering online.
- Strengthened community bonds and intergenerational dialogue.

Success Factors

- Safe, small-group learning environment tailored to seniors' pace.
- Real-world, practical topics (e.g., health portals, digital communication, video creation).
- Intergenerational learning encouraged through youth volunteers.
- Flexibility in content and approach across different countries.

Recommendations

Yes, this practice is highly transferable. Any adult education centre can implement it with:

- Access to basic ICT infrastructure (Wi-Fi, tablets/laptops).
- Community outreach capabilities.
- Volunteer recruitment or partnerships with youth organizations.

Tips / Implementation

- Use easy-to-understand visuals and printed step-by-step guides.
- Begin with familiar digital tools (e.g., mobile phones before PCs).

Celebrate small achievements (e.g., "first email sent" certificates, best video).

Intergenerational Learning

Intergenerational learning is a dynamic approach where people of all ages—from children and young adults to the elderly—learn together and from each other in ways that are mutually beneficial.

It is characterized by:

- Reciprocity
- Collaboration
- Lifelong Learning
- Key Benefits

Intergenerational learning offers significant advantages for all involved:

For Younger Generations (Children/Youth)	For Older Generations (Adults/Elders)	For the Community
Increased self-esteem and confidence.	Reduced social isolation and loneliness.	Strengthened community bonds and cohesion.
Improved social and emotional skills (empathy, respect for diverse perspectives).	Improved mental and cognitive health (e.g., enhanced memory, a sense of purpose).	Reduced ageism and breaking down stereotypes between age groups.
Access to life skills, historical context, and cultural knowledge from experienced adults.	Opportunities to learn new skills (especially technology) and feel valued.	Cultural preservation as traditions and life stories are passed on.
Enhanced academic and literacy skills.	Improved physical health when participating in shared physical activities.	Collaborative problem-solving on social or environmental issues using combined experience and innovation.

Example of Good Practice

Education and Culture Classrooms

Summary of the Practice

The example of good practice presented is part of the Valladolid Provincial Council's Continuing Education programme, called *Education and Culture Classrooms*, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023.

The programme began in the 1983–1984 academic year and aims to promote a sense of belonging to a shared humanity. It is open to people over the age of 18 and offers opportunities for social interaction, participation, and personal enjoyment.

From its inception, the programme has had a visible impact on the social and cultural life of local municipalities. It has created spaces for dialogue, debate, creativity, play, and active participation, which remain central to its approach today. Over the years, both the methodologies used and the thematic focus of daily educational practice have evolved. As a result, the training offer has diversified and now includes courses in English, film, art, geography, creative writing, emotional management, mythology, and symbolism in art.

Objectives

- Address diverse themes and events related to current, historical, literary, and life issues, supporting not only conceptual learning but also the development of skills and attitudes needed for everyday life.
- Promote a sense of belonging to a shared humanity and a shared planet by fostering empathy, care for resources, solidarity, and respect for diversity and differences.
- Empower learners to engage in critical reflection, express ideas and emotions orally and in writing, and practise active listening—key competences for functioning as autonomous global citizens.

Methodology

The methodology was designed to be active and participatory, starting from what learners already know. Learning outcomes were developed gradually, covering knowledge, practical skills, and attitudes. Teaching units followed a clear and logical sequence, with specific activities supporting each stage of the learning process.

- Motivational / awareness-raising activities
  – “What do you know about…?” / “What would you like to know about…?” activities
  – Watching videos, listening to songs, reading headlines
- Research / knowledge-building activities
  – Reading and discussing articles
  – Listening to podcasts
  – Individual research using the internet or books
  – Designing and conducting interviews or surveys
  – Presenting content and organising it through concept maps
  – Cultural outings (museums, cinemas, exhibitions)
- Reflection activities
  – Group discussions based on acquired knowledge and research
- Communication / assessment activities
  – Creating products related to the topic
  – Educational games
  – Mini-meetings with nearby communities or towns

- Sessions last two hours and are held weekly.

Outcomes

The concrete results of this good practice, based on participation data from the 2024 census, can be summarised as follows:

- Student engagement: 95% of participants reported high engagement in research activities and discussions, completing tasks with dedication.
- Attendance: Weekly attendance was consistent. Absences were mainly due to health issues or caregiving responsibilities.
- Participation in final activities: Learners actively took part in the final phase of the teaching units, including games and, most importantly, the creation of final products.

Success Factors

The practice was successful because it placed learners at the centre of the learning process. At many stages, participants shared their own knowledge and experiences with others, reinforcing peer learning. The continuous and active presence of the facilitator also played a key role. The educator supported and guided the group, encouraged participation, clarified content, and helped recognise and value the diverse roles within the group.

Recommendations

This practice is highly transferable and can be implemented in small towns. However, it requires strong teacher involvement, including flexible scheduling, regular follow-up through WhatsApp groups, ongoing group motivation, continuous content updates, and close attention to current events and participants' interests.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Ensure regular weekly meetings (e.g. 2-hour sessions) to build continuity and group cohesion.
- Keep group sizes manageable to allow dialogue and individual participation.
- Combine cultural stimuli (films, articles, music, artworks) with guided discussion.
- Integrate local cultural outings (museums, exhibitions, community events) whenever possible.
- Encourage learners to co-create final products (presentations, mini-projects, community meetings).
- Maintain communication between sessions (e.g. WhatsApp groups) to sustain engagement.
- Adapt topics to current events and participants' interests to keep learning meaningful.
- Provide strong facilitator support focused on moderation, inclusion, and active listening.

Community-based Learning

Community-Based Learning (CBL) is an educational strategy that integrates meaningful community engagement with academic instruction and critical reflection.

It is an experiential learning approach that connects what students are taught in the classroom to real-world issues, contexts, and problems in their local community. The core idea is that the community serves as a learning space where students can apply theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills, and contribute to addressing actual community needs.

Benefits of CBL

CBL provides significant advantages for all involved parties:

Beneficiary	Key Benefits
Students	✓ Deeper learning: Increased grasp of academic content through real-world application. ✓ Skill development: Hones critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. ✓ Civic responsibility: Fosters a stronger sense of empathy, civic engagement, and social responsibility. ✓ Career preparedness: Provides professional networking and resume-building experience.
Community Partners	✓ Increased capacity: Receive valuable assistance and fresh perspectives on community needs and problems. ✓ Access to resources: Gain access to the knowledge and expertise of faculty and students. ✓ Future stability: Helps build future stability by engaging young people in their mission.
Institution	✓ Stronger ties: Cultivates positive, reciprocal relationships with the local community. ✓ Enhanced reputation: Positions the institution as a leader in experiential education and community outreach.

Example of Good Practice

Back to the Future – Seniors as Digital Storyteller Gurus

Summary of the Practice

Back to the Future – Seniors as Digital Storyteller Gurus is an intergenerational learning project that empowers older adults to become digital content creators by sharing their life stories through digital storytelling tools and social media. The initiative enhances digital literacy, personal expression, and social inclusion.

In an increasingly digital society, many older adults face exclusion due to a lack of digital skills, confidence, or access to appropriate learning opportunities. While much of the focus in digital education is placed on younger generations, older adults are often left behind, leading to a digital divide that affects not only their access to services but also their social participation and self-expression.

This project emerged to respond to this gap by creating an inclusive and empowering learning environment where older adults could gain confidence in using digital tools, while also engaging in meaningful, creative work. The initiative focuses on digital storytelling—the use of photos, videos, voice, and text to craft and share personal narratives.

Objectives

The Back to the Future project was designed to combine digital inclusion with personal and cultural empowerment. Its objectives are both technological and humanistic, focusing on digital competence, creativity, and intergenerational learning:

- To enhance digital literacy among older adults through engaging and purposeful use of technology;
- To enable seniors to share their life stories using digital tools, fostering self-expression and legacy-building;
- To promote intergenerational learning by connecting seniors with young volunteers or facilitators in a cooperative learning process;
- To reduce digital and social isolation, helping older people feel more connected and valued in today's digital world;
- To encourage active ageing, through participation in meaningful and creative activities;
- To develop accessible digital storytelling methodologies that can be replicated in various adult education and community contexts.

Rather than focusing on abstract skills, the project aims to use digital storytelling as a bridge to connection, self-worth, and creativity. Participants learn not just to use digital devices, but to use them for something that truly matters to them: telling their story.

Methodology

The *Back to the Future* project follows a practical, creative, and intergenerational approach. It is structured around hands-on learning experiences that support older adults in becoming digital storytellers, with the guidance of younger facilitators or educators.

Step-by-Step Implementation

- Recruitment of participants
- Training of facilitators
- Workshops and story circles
- Digital literacy development
- Story creation
- Sharing and exhibition
- Feedback and reflection

Duration and Format

- The project is typically implemented in cycles of 8–12 weeks, with 1–2 sessions per week (1.5 to 2 hours each).
- Sessions are held in informal, friendly environments such as senior universities, libraries, or local cultural spaces.

Outcomes

The Back to the Future project has produced significant and multi-layered outcomes, both at the individual and community levels. Its impact goes beyond digital skill acquisition, encompassing emotional, social, and intergenerational transformation.

- Improved digital competence
- Empowerment through self-expression
- Reduced social and digital isolation
- Strengthened intergenerational bonds
- New learning communities
- Dissemination and visibility

Success Factors

The success of *The Back to the Future* lies in its capacity to combine digital empowerment, creativity, and intergenerational solidarity within a simple, replicable structure. Several key factors contributed to the effectiveness of the practice:

- Storytelling as a motivating tool.
- Learning by doing
- Intergenerational collaboration
- Flexible, non-formal environment
- Cultural expression and visibility
- European collaboration and resources

Recommendations

- The practice can be implemented in senior clubs, libraries, community centres, or non-formal education settings.
- Small and consistent groups support trust-building and peer learning.
- Facilitators should be prepared to combine digital guidance with emotional support.
- A safe, respectful environment is essential for sharing personal stories.
- Cooperation with youth organisations or volunteers strengthens the intergenerational dimension.
- Public presentation of outcomes increases visibility and participant motivation.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Start with introductory sessions focused on communication and trust-building.
- Keep group sizes manageable to ensure individual support.
- Provide clear and accessible learning materials adapted to participants' digital level.
- Encourage participants to bring personal photos, memories, or objects to inspire storytelling.
- Allow time for reflection and group discussion after each session.
- Focus on the learning process rather than technical perfection.
- Document the stories and share them within the local community to reinforce visibility and pride.

Digital & Blended Learning

Digital learning and blended learning are two related educational approaches that leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning, but they are distinct in their structure and delivery.

Digital learning is an umbrella term for any learning process that is mediated, or supported, by digital technologies. It focuses on using a variety of digital tools and resources to:

- Provide flexibility over time, place, path, and/or pace of learning.
- Offer personalized experiences tailored to individual student needs and styles.
- Enhance accessibility to educational materials.
- Include various formats, such as online courses, mobile learning, educational software, video lectures, and interactive content.

Feature	Digital Learning	Blended Learning
Scope	Broad – an umbrella term for any learning supported by technology.	Specific – a specific instructional model that combines two delivery types.

Delivery	Can be fully online (e.g., a MOOC), mobile, or simply technology-enhanced.	Always a mix of in-person (face-to-face) and digital/online components.
Location	Can be anywhere (online only) or a physical classroom.	Requires both a physical classroom and online access.

Example of Good Practice

Digital Mentorship Programme: Seniors Learning from Peers

Summary of the Practice

The Digital Mentorship Programme is a structured peer-to-peer initiative where digitally competent older adults mentor their peers who lack digital skills. This model leverages peer credibility, empathy, and shared experiences to accelerate digital learning, improve confidence, and reduce the sense of isolation common among older adults unfamiliar with modern technologies. It aligns with the general Adult Education goals by modernizing adult education practices in a culturally sensitive, low-pressure way that emphasises both empowerment and community.

Objectives

- Improve digital competencies among older adults using a peer-led format.
- Build learner confidence and reduce resistance to digital tools.
- Promote volunteerism and active ageing.
- Strengthen the sense of purpose and societal contribution among senior mentors.
- Facilitate community-based education and digital inclusion in underserved areas.

Methodology

Phase 1: Mentor Recruitment & Training

- The centre identified digitally literate older adults (aged 55+) with interest in volunteering.
- Short training (3 sessions) equipped them with teaching and communication strategies tailored to peer learning.
- Mentors received toolkits with step-by-step guides, common troubleshooting FAQs, and a mentorship manual.

Phase 2: Mentee Enrolment

- Participants with little or no digital experience registered via local centres.
- Learners were matched with mentors based on language, interests, and availability.

Phase 3: Mentoring Sessions

- Pairs met weekly for 1–2 hours over 6 weeks in familiar, informal environments.
- Curriculum was demand-driven: mentees chose focus areas (e.g., using government services online, video calls, photo sharing, video creation).
- Mentors reported progress to a programme coordinator for feedback and support.

Phase 4: Group Reflection & Celebration

- Mentors and mentees gathered at the end of the cycle to share experiences and success stories.
- Certificates and recognition for both mentors and learners enhanced motivation.

Outcomes

- Over 30 mentorship pairs successfully completed cycles in the pilot phase.
- 87% of mentees reported feeling “more confident” using digital tools.
- Mentors reported increased self-worth and purpose.
- Many mentees went on to teach others informally—creating a ripple effect.

Success Factors

- High empathy and relatability between mentor and learner.
- Focused, 1-on-1 attention—learners moved at their own pace.
- Low-cost, easily scalable using local volunteers and spaces.
- Social bonding and interdependence among seniors.

Recommendations

Easily transferable to adult education centres, NGOs, libraries, and senior associations across Europe. To succeed, implementers need:

- A pool of digitally capable older adults
- Basic coordination (one part-time coordinator per region)
- Accessible learning spaces
- Printed support materials and mentor training.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Begin with tech-savvy retirees (e.g. former office workers, teachers).
- Use simple feedback forms to track progress and adapt sessions.
- Acknowledge and celebrate mentors—retention improves when they feel appreciated.

Peer Learning

Peer learning is an educational practice where students or colleagues learn with and from each other through a collaborative and reciprocal process. Instead of all knowledge flowing directly from a single teacher or expert, peers share, teach, and support one another to achieve mutual learning goals.

Benefits of Peer Learning

Peer learning provides a range of cognitive and social benefits:

Benefit Type	Description
Cognitive	**Deeper Understanding:** Explaining material to others solidifies one's own grasp of the subject. **Diverse Perspectives:** Exposure to multiple viewpoints and problem-solving strategies enhances critical thinking.
Social & Emotional	**Improved Skills:** Fosters teamwork, communication, cooperation, and patience. **Increased Comfort:** Peers often use simpler, more relatable language and create a less-judgemental environment, increasing the willingness to ask questions.
Academic	**Better Outcomes:** Studies show it can lead to improved conceptual understanding and academic performance. **Increased Engagement:** The social element makes the learning process more enjoyable and motivating.

Example of Good Practice

"Learning Garden – Hands-on Environmental Education for Social Inclusion"

Summary of the Practice

The "*Learning Garden*" is a nature-based education practice designed to support the social inclusion of marginalized adults, including refugees, low-income families, and people with disabilities. By engaging participants in hands-on gardening, environmental education, and group activities in a community garden, the programme fosters social connection, ecological awareness, and personal empowerment**.** The goal is to provide a safe, inclusive, and calming space where participants can learn

by doing, reconnect with nature, and build self-confidence while developing sustainable habits and social bonds.

In urban areas like Berlin, many socially disadvantaged adults, including migrants, unemployed individuals, and people with mental health conditions, face social isolation, lack of purpose, and low engagement with formal education. Traditional classroom-based learning often fails to attract or retain these learners. There was a growing need for alternative, low-threshold learning spaces where participants could connect, build confidence, and develop competences in a hands-on and supportive environment.

Target Group

- Adults with low qualifications or long-term unemployment
- Refugees and migrants with limited formal education experience
- People with mental health issues or recovering from psychosocial crises
- Seniors and adults with social anxiety or isolation

Objectives

- Use nature-based education to foster self-efficacy, social skills, and sustainable awareness among marginalized adults
- Create inclusive and therapeutic outdoor learning spaces that promote well-being and reduce stress
- Develop practical skills in organic gardening, environmental stewardship, and teamwork
- Improve employability through transferable soft skills (timekeeping, responsibility, collaboration)

Methodology

Step-by-Step Implementation:

1. Space Setup: Vacant land near the centre was converted into an accessible learning garden with raised beds, rainwater tanks, seating areas, and a small outdoor classroom.
2. Participant Outreach: Referrals came through local social workers, job centres, and neighbourhood projects. No previous knowledge or literacy was required.
3. Weekly Sessions: Participants joined small group sessions (2–3 hours/week) over 12–16 weeks, led by trained garden educators and social pedagogues.
4. Thematic Learning Modules: Topics included composting, soil care, seasonal planting, biodiversity, nutrition, and community-building.
5. Reflection & Social Integration: Sessions always ended with a group reflection circle. Participants shared meals with herbs and vegetables they grew, promoting belonging and cultural exchange.
6. Community Events: The garden hosted harvest festivals, open days, and workshops for families, increasing visibility and local engagement.

Methods Used

- Experiential, nature – based learning
- Groupwork and storytelling
- Tactile and sensory activities (e.g., planting, cooking, harvesting)
- Non-verbal learning formats (ideal for low-literacy participants)

Outcomes

Concrete Results:

- Over 150 adults completed the Learning Garden cycle since 2020.
- 75% continued to engage in further education or volunteering activities.
- Several participants went on to join urban agriculture or sustainability training programmes.
- Strengthened community ties and reduced feelings of isolation and anxiety among participants.

Impact on Participants:

- Participants gained confidence, routine, and a sense of agency
- Improved physical and mental health, especially for those with long-term unemployment or trauma

The learning process promoted intercultural exchange and peer learning

Success Factors

What made the practice effective and innovative:

- Low – threshold, non-digital format accessible to all adults regardless of literacy or language
- Use of nature and gardening as therapeutic and educational tools
- Learner – centred, informal, and trauma-sensitive approach
- Cross – sector collaboration between educators, social workers, and gardeners

Unique or Creative Elements

- Learning through nature—plants, soil, and seasons became “teachers”
- “Harvest & share” meals made learning tangible and nourishing
- Use of reflection circles and storytelling rather than formal assessments

Recommendations

Conditions for Successful Implementation:

- Outdoor space with basic infrastructure (raised beds, shelter, water access)
- Trainers familiar with inclusive pedagogy and environmental education

- Partnerships with local health, employment, or social services for outreach
- Flexible schedule and ongoing feedback loop from participants

Tips / Implementation

- Avoid overly structured curricula – let the garden and seasons guide the learning
- Design with accessibility in mind (wide paths, raised beds, quiet corners)
- Include informal social time (tea, meals, conversations) to build trust
- Use observation and journals (visual or verbal) to track progress

Mentoring / Coaching

Mentoring and coaching are both valuable development approaches, focused on helping individuals grow and reach their potential, but they have distinct characteristics:

Mentoring

1. Focus: Long-term, holistic professional and personal growth, career development, and navigating challenges.
2. Relationship: Involves a more experienced, trusted advisor (mentor) sharing their wisdom, knowledge, and personal experience with a less experienced individual (mentee).
3. Timeframe: Tends to be long-term, often lasting a year or more.
4. Expertise: The mentor typically has direct experience in the mentee's field or career path.
5. Agenda: Generally mentee-driven; the mentee sets the agenda and seeks advice or guidance.
6. Approach: More likely to be informal and involves the mentor giving advice, sharing stories, and providing direct counsel.

Coaching

1. Focus: Short-term, performance-driven improvement in specific skills, tasks, or achieving measurable goals.
2. Relationship: Involves a coach partnering with the individual (coachee) in a thought-provoking process. The coach does not necessarily need to have direct experience in the coachee's specific job.
3. Timeframe: Often short-term or time-bound, focusing on specific outcomes.
4. Expertise: Coaches are trained in coaching methodology and skill development.
5. Agenda: Co-created by the coach and coachee, focusing on the specific needs and goals.
6. Approach: More structured and is typically non-directive. The coach uses powerful questions to help the coachee find their own answers, build self-awareness, and develop an action plan.

Example of Good Practice

Forma-te: A Collaborative Learning and Resource Sharing Platform for Adult Educators

Summary of the Practice

Forma-te is an online platform designed to support the continuous professional development of adult educators, trainers, and other education professionals in Portugal. It functions both as a digital repository and an active learning community, where users can share, access, and evaluate educational resources.

Its primary purpose is to promote collaborative learning and peer support through a credit-based system that rewards the sharing of original content. Trainers earn credits when uploading resources (such as lesson plans, worksheets, or tools), which can then be used to download materials shared by others. This reciprocal model fosters a sense of community, trust, and professional recognition among adult educators.

The platform also provides updated information on adult education policies, training opportunities, professional certification (such as the CCP), and pedagogical trends, making it a valuable hub for anyone involved in the non-formal education sector.

Targeted mainly at trainers and education professionals, *Forma-te* enhances the quality of adult education by facilitating access to practical resources, encouraging reflective practice, and supporting professional growth through active participation in a peer-led network.

Objectives

The main objectives of *Forma-te* are to promote quality in adult education and to empower trainers through access to resources, peer learning, and professional recognition. More specifically, the practice aims to:

- Foster a collaborative learning culture among adult educators by encouraging the sharing of pedagogical materials and experiences;
- Facilitate access to practical, ready-to-use educational resources tailored to adult learning contexts (non-formal, vocational, community-based);
- Promote the professional development of trainers through reflective practice, exposure to new methodologies, and contact with peer contributions;
- Encourage digital participation and literacy by offering a user-friendly online environment and promoting the use of digital tools for training purposes;
- Support the visibility and value of the trainer's role, recognising contributions through a credit system that rewards active participation;
- Bridge the gap between policy and practice, by sharing updates on regulatory frameworks (such as CCP requirements) and fostering a space for informed debate.

The overarching goal is to create a sustainable, inclusive, and participatory ecosystem for adult education professionals, where continuous learning is not only encouraged but rewarded and facilitated through peer support.

Methodology

The implementation of *Forma-te* followed a clear, scalable, and user-focused methodology centred on three main pillars: content sharing, peer interaction, and platform usability. The process unfolded in several stages:

1. Platform Development and Design

A small team of educators and developers designed the platform with the specific needs of adult education professionals in mind. The design prioritised:

- Ease of navigation;
- User autonomy;
- A clean and functional interface;
- Integration of a credit system as a motivational mechanism.

The credit system was inspired by peer-to-peer exchange principles: users earn credits by uploading original content and can use those credits to download materials uploaded by others. This model fosters fairness, contribution, and reciprocity.

2. Resource Structure and Curation

The platform allows users to share a wide range of resources, including:

- Training session plans;
- Worksheets and exercises;
- Practical tools and templates;
- Theoretical reflections or technical articles;
- Official documents and guidelines relevant to the training field.

Each resource is tagged, categorised, and described by the contributor. Other users can rate and comment on the materials, supporting a culture of quality control and peer feedback.

3. Community Engagement and Communication

The platform grew organically through:

- Word of mouth and professional networks;
- Collaborations with training centres and adult education organisations;
- Regular publication of informative articles, newsletters, and legal updates;
- Active presence on social media.

Over time, the community began to self-regulate, with experienced users contributing regularly and offering informal mentoring through forum interactions and commentaries.

4. Ongoing Maintenance and Evolution

Continuous feedback is collected from users to improve functionalities. New categories and features are added regularly, such as:

- Thematic calls for resource sharing (e.g., digital inclusion, green skills);
- Highlighted resources and contributors;
- Integration with other initiatives like *Transforma-te*, promoting pedagogical innovation.

Timeframe

The platform was conceptualised and developed over a period of approximately 6–9 months, with continuous updates and refinements since its launch. It is an ongoing initiative with long-term sustainability ensured through community engagement and minimal operational costs.

Outcomes

Since its launch, *Forma-te* has demonstrated clear and measurable outcomes in improving collaboration, professional development, and access to quality resources within the adult education sector in Portugal.

1. Growth of the Community

- Over 10,000 registered users, primarily adult educators, trainers, and training technicians;
- A dynamic and growing base of active contributors who regularly share and evaluate materials;
- High levels of return users, indicating sustained engagement and satisfaction with the platform.

2. Resource Availability and Use

- More than 15,000 educational resources shared to date;
- Frequent downloads and reuse of materials in real training contexts, especially in vocational education and non-formal adult learning;
- Topics covered range from basic skills training to digital literacy, entrepreneurship, social skills, and inclusive education.

3. Positive Impact on Professional Practice

- Trainers report feeling more connected and recognised in their professional roles;
- Use of the platform has led to improved planning and delivery of training sessions, with access to new ideas and methodologies;
- The rating and commenting system supports reflective practice and constructive feedback among peers.

4. Promotion of a Sharing Culture

- The credit-based model has successfully encouraged peer-to-peer exchange;
- A visible shift from passive resource consumption to active contribution;
- Emergence of informal networks and mentoring relationships within the platform.

5. Contribution to Policy and Innovation

- The platform has become a reference point for training providers and professionals navigating the certification process (e.g., CCP);
- It has helped bridge the gap between regulation and practice, offering practical tools aligned with official guidelines;
- Integration with the *Transforma-te* initiative has expanded its scope to include pedagogical innovation, creative methodologies, and system-level change.

In short, *Forma-te* has contributed significantly to strengthening the adult education ecosystem in Portugal by making high-quality, community-driven resources accessible and by enhancing the role of trainers as active agents of educational change

Success Factors

Several key factors have contributed to the success and sustainability of *Forma-te* as a good practice in adult education:

- Credit-Based Resource Exchange Model
  The innovative system where users gain credits by uploading resources—and use those credits to download materials—creates a strong incentive for contribution. It transforms users from passive consumers into active co-creators of the platform.
- Peer-Led and Community-Driven
  Forma-te empowers trainers by placing them at the centre of the platform's development. The quality and relevance of the content come from within the community, ensuring real-world applicability and responsiveness to trainers' actual needs.
- Practical and Diverse Resource Library
  The platform offers a wide variety of resources, adaptable to different training contexts and learner profiles. This variety is one of the most appreciated features by users and supports differentiated instruction.
- Low Barrier to Entry
  No special qualifications or institutional affiliation are required to join and contribute, making the platform widely accessible. Its user-friendly interface enables quick onboarding, even for less digitally confident educators.
- Strong Informal Recognition
  Trainers receive informal validation and peer feedback via ratings and comments, creating a positive reinforcement loop. This contributes to a sense of professional identity and motivation.

- Integration with Broader Educational Trends
  Forma-te aligns with national strategies on lifelong learning and adult education. Its integration with *Transforma-te*, a project focused on educational innovation, adds a layer of reflection, experimentation, and pedagogical renewal.
- Financial Sustainability and Independence
  The platform operates with minimal funding, relying primarily on voluntary engagement and low maintenance costs. This lean model ensures its resilience and long-term viability.

Together, these factors make *Forma-te* a robust, inclusive, and inspiring model of collaborative professional development in adult learning.

Recommendations

The *Forma-te* model is highly transferable and can be adapted to a wide range of national and local contexts, particularly those where adult education professionals operate in dispersed or under-supported environments.

Conditions for successful implementation

- A clear and simple credit system
  The core motivational mechanism should be well explained, transparent, and easy to use. It must reward contribution without creating barriers to access.
- Initial community building
  A strong start requires identifying and involving a group of engaged educators or organisations willing to share content and promote the platform among peers.
- User-friendly digital environment
  The interface must be intuitive for trainers with different levels of digital literacy, especially those less confident using technology.
- Quality control mechanisms
  Peer review, ratings, and comment systems help maintain the quality and relevance of shared materials without requiring a centralised gatekeeper.
- Local adaptation
  While the structure is replicable, content categories, languages, and certification references should reflect the national/regional adult education framework.
- Strategic communication
  Promotion through professional associations, training entities, and social media can help scale engagement and embed the platform within existing networks.
- Openness and trust
  Building a culture of sharing relies on transparency, fairness, and mutual respect—values that must be embedded in the platform's governance and community ethos.

Organisations interested in adopting this model should pilot the platform with a small community of practice, gather feedback, and scale progressively. It is particularly suitable for training institutions,

lifelong learning networks, or adult education consortia looking to strengthen internal collaboration and external impact.

Tips / Implementation

Based on the experience of *Forma-te*, here are some practical tips for those wishing to implement a similar practice in their context:

Before Launch

- Start with a needs analysis: Talk to trainers and adult educators to understand their main challenges and resource needs.
- Keep it simple: Avoid over-complicating the credit system or the upload/download process. Simplicity is key for engagement.
- Use open-source tools: Platforms like WordPress or Moodle (with plugins) can support basic versions of a sharing portal at low cost.

During Implementation

- Pilot with a small, trusted group: Invite a few enthusiastic trainers to upload materials and give feedback. Their early contributions will set the tone and quality standard.
- Set clear content guidelines: Clarify what types of resources are welcome, how they should be described, and what formats are acceptable.
- Use storytelling to grow the community: Share real stories of trainers who have benefited from the platform to build emotional connection and credibility.

After Launch

- Create regular challenges or sharing campaigns: For example, thematic weeks (e.g., “Digital Inclusion Tools”) can stimulate activity and renew interest.
- Celebrate top contributors: Acknowledge frequent sharers or highly rated content through newsletters or social media.
- Provide micro-support: Offer brief tutorials, FAQs or even a buddy system for those unsure about how to contribute.

Sustainability Tips

- Keep operational costs low by encouraging peer moderation instead of full-time staff;
- Partner with institutions (adult education centres, universities, municipalities) to widen reach and legitimacy;

Encourage co-ownership: Let users suggest improvements and feel part of the platform’s evolution.

Cultural / Creative approaches

Cultural and creative approaches in adult education place the human experience at the centre of learning. Rather than relying solely on formal instruction or data-driven strategies, they draw on arts, heritage, design, and storytelling to foster reflection, dialogue, identity-building, and community engagement.

In adult learning contexts, these approaches help participants connect knowledge to lived experience, strengthen social bonds, and develop critical and creative thinking. By integrating cultural expression into educational practice, learning becomes not only informative but also meaningful and transformative.

In practical terms, this may involve using artistic interpretation, local history, visual analysis, or narrative techniques to explore social issues, build shared understanding, and promote active participation.

Example of Good Practice

Mythology and Symbolism via Telematic tools.

Summary of the Practice

The *Mythology and Symbolism in Art* online group was created in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aimed to address the educational needs of adults in the province of Valladolid by using a simple and widely accessible digital tool: WhatsApp.

The course delivered content through short micro-lessons supported by documents, photographs, videos, and interactive activities. This format allowed participants to engage with cultural and artistic topics in a flexible and accessible way.

Even after the return to in-person teaching, the online format was maintained. It proved particularly valuable for participants who were unable or reluctant to attend face-to-face sessions due to work schedules, personal circumstances, or health-related concerns.

The practice is closely linked to the long-standing Education and Culture Classrooms programme of the Valladolid Provincial Council, which has operated in rural areas for over 40 years. The online format extended its reach and ensured continuity of access for diverse groups of adult learners.

Objectives

- To foster interest in history, mythology, and art through the study of architectural, sculptural, and symbolic elements.
- To promote independent and collaborative learning in an accessible digital environment.
- To use WhatsApp as a teaching tool to facilitate participation, monitoring, and continuous interaction between learners and educators.

Objectives by Competence Area

1. Historical and contextual understanding
    - Identify and contextualise key historical processes shaping urban and cultural development.
    - Understand the role of religious, social, and political institutions in shaping cultural heritage.
    - Relate historical debates to broader ethical and human rights discussions.
2. Artistic observation and interpretation
    - Analyse architectural and sculptural elements as expressions of power, belief, and identity.
    - Interpret artistic styles from different historical periods.
    - Recognise the symbolic and formal characteristics of classical and pre-classical art traditions.
3. Interpretation of mythology and symbolism
    - Interpret mythological narratives through artistic representation.
    - Connect iconographic elements with their social, religious, and cultural meanings.
    - Compare sacred spaces and their ritual and aesthetic functions.
4. Communication and critical reflection
    - Participate actively in digital discussions and group tasks.
    - Formulate reasoned opinions on historical and cultural topics.
    - Produce written and oral contributions (texts, audio, images) with clarity and coherence.
5. Digital and autonomous learning skills
    - Use WhatsApp as a tool for learning, communication, and collaboration.
    - Select and share relevant digital resources.
    - Manage individual learning while engaging respectfully in group dynamics.

Methodology

The course methodology is based on continuous interaction via WhatsApp, using its various formats (text, audio, images, and links) to diversify learning activities. The approach integrates multimedia resources and active techniques such as debate, oral storytelling, guided research, and visual analysis. All assignments were designed to be accessible via mobile phones and compatible with flexible schedules, supporting adult learners in balancing study with personal and professional responsibilities.

- Weekly mini-lessons**:** Content was divided into short modules delivered through concise texts, explanatory audio clips, and visual materials (images and videos related to the artistic and historical topics studied).
- Questions and debates**:** Participants were encouraged to ask questions, comment on materials, and engage in structured discussions to promote critical thinking.
- Multimedia resources**:** Links to image galleries, 3D reconstructions, and virtual tours supported deeper understanding.

- Practical exercises: Short tasks focused on identifying artistic elements, symbols, or mythological references in visual materials.
- Shared repositories: Participants contributed relevant articles, images, or videos, fostering collaborative knowledge-building.

The online course followed the same academic calendar as the in-person version, running throughout the 2024–2025 academic year.

Outcomes

The results obtained have been largely satisfactory, as they are based on the idea that adult education should respect the diversity of life paths, enhance students' prior experiences, and foster horizontal dialogue. This has allowed for the creation of a dialogic "virtual community" in which all students feel they are participating in a common programme with common goals and content.

Success Factors

Several elements contributed to the success of this practice:

- The use of a widely accessible and familiar digital tool (WhatsApp), reducing technological barriers.
- Flexible structure adapted to adult learners with diverse schedules and responsibilities.
- Short, well-structured micro-lessons that maintained engagement.
- Combination of text, audio, images, and multimedia resources, supporting different learning styles.
- Continuous interaction between participants and facilitator, fostering a sense of community.
- Strong connection with the existing Education and Culture Classrooms programme, ensuring continuity and pedagogical coherence.

Recommendations

This practice is highly transferable and can be implemented in various adult education contexts, especially where access to computers or advanced platforms is limited. For successful implementation:

- A facilitator capable of moderating online discussions and providing regular feedback is essential.
- The group should remain consistent to build trust and continuity.
- Content should be adapted to participants' cultural background and interests.
- Clear weekly structure and communication rules help maintain engagement.
- The online format can effectively complement face-to-face classes.

Tips / Implementation Advice

- Divide content into short, manageable learning units.
- Use varied formats (text, audio, images) to maintain attention and inclusivity.
- Encourage active participation through questions and small reflective tasks.
- Set clear expectations regarding response time and communication etiquette.
- Provide regular summaries of discussions to reinforce key learning points.
- Ensure materials are fully accessible via smartphones.
- Maintain a balance between structured guidance and open discussion.

Collaborative / Partner-based approaches

Collaborative or partner-based approaches refer to strategies in which two or more organisations, groups, or individuals work together toward a shared and mutually beneficial goal. The core principle is the pooling of resources — such as knowledge, expertise, funding, or technology — to achieve outcomes that would be difficult to accomplish independently.

In adult education and community contexts, these approaches promote shared responsibility, horizontal relationships, and long-term sustainability. Rather than relying on a top-down expert-client model, collaborative frameworks encourage co-creation, dialogue, and local ownership.

Feature	Traditional Approach	Collaborative Approach
Power Dynamic	Top-down / Directive	Horizontal / Mutual
Problem Solving	Expert-led solutions	Community-led solutions
Sustainability	Dependent on external aid	Built on local ownership
Communication	One-way reporting	Continuous feedback loops

Example of Good Practice

Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers

Summary of the Practice

Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers is a continuing education course designed for adult trainers who wish to develop or enhance their ability to plan, implement, and evaluate e-learning activities. The course equips participants with digital pedagogical skills, enabling them to use online

platforms, design digital content, and create interactive learning environments. It supports the professionalisation of trainers working in adult education, particularly in blended or distance learning contexts.

The emergence and expansion of digital learning environments, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed a critical gap in the digital pedagogical skills of many adult educators and trainers. Traditional training methods no longer met the demands of online or blended learning contexts, creating a need for targeted professional development.

The target group includes trainers and adult educators working in professional training centres, vocational institutions, or freelance settings. Many had experience in classroom-based teaching but lacked the confidence and methodological knowledge to deliver learning effectively through digital platforms.

This practice is usually implemented within the framework of continuous professional development (CPD) and may be delivered by organisations accredited by DGERT in Portugal. It can also be part of national or European funded programmes, such as POISE, Portugal 2020, or Erasmus+ KA1 mobility projects.

Objectives

The main goals of the practice *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* are:

- To improve digital literacy and confidence among adult educators in using online platforms and tools.
- To develop pedagogical strategies that are effective in virtual and blended learning environments.
- To promote learner engagement through interactive and multimedia content.
- To ensure inclusive and accessible learning, adapting materials to different learner profiles and digital access levels.
- To foster a culture of innovation in training, encouraging educators to experiment with new formats such as microlearning, gamification, or collaborative tools.
- To support the transition of traditional training centres to hybrid or fully online delivery models.

Overall, the practice seeks to bridge the digital divide in adult education and ensure that trainers can deliver high-quality learning experiences in any format.

Methodology

The course *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* is typically delivered in a blended or fully online format, with a duration ranging from 15 to 35 hours. The methodology follows a hands-on and reflective learning model in which trainers apply tools and approaches directly to their own teaching contexts. The focus is on practical implementation, peer interaction, and gradual skill development.

Step-by-Step implementation

1. Needs Assessment
   Participants complete a short diagnostic or self-assessment to identify their starting point in terms of digital competence and familiarity with e-learning tools.
2. Introductory Module
   An overview of digital education is provided, including the benefits and challenges of e-learning and the key pedagogical differences between face-to-face and online formats.
3. Toolbox Exploration
   Participants are introduced to a range of commonly used digital tools, such as:
   - Moodle or Google Classroom for course organisation
   - Canva, Genially, or PowerPoint for content creation
   - Padlet, Mentimeter, or Jamboard for interaction
   - Screencast-O-Matic or Loom for recording lessons
   - Kahoot or Quizizz for gamified assessment

   The emphasis is placed not only on how these tools function, but on how they can enhance pedagogical effectiveness.
4. Design Activities
   Participants design their own e-learning activities, adapting digital tools to their professional context and applying instructional design principles (e.g. ADDIE or SAMR models).
5. Peer Feedback and Reflection
   Trainers engage in structured peer review through forums or synchronous sessions. They share their work, provide constructive feedback, and reflect on ways to improve their digital teaching practice.
6. Final Assignment / Simulation
   Each participant delivers a short online training session or module segment using the tools and strategies explored during the course.
7. Follow-up and Support
   Optional mentoring or the creation of a community of practice may be offered to support continued implementation and knowledge exchange beyond the formal training period.

Outcomes

The implementation of *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* has led to several concrete and measurable outcomes:

- Increased digital confidence among trainers
  Participants report feeling more autonomous and comfortable using online platforms, integrating multimedia resources, and managing virtual classrooms.
- Improved training design
  Trainers develop more structured and engaging e-learning modules, with stronger alignment between learning objectives, content, and assessment methods.
- Enhanced learner engagement

Courses redesigned by trained educators demonstrate higher levels of interaction and reduced dropout rates, particularly when incorporating interactive and gamified tools.

- Greater inclusivity and accessibility
  Participants apply accessibility principles and adapt materials to meet the needs of adult learners with varying levels of digital competence.
- Development of peer support networks
  Many editions of the course lead to the formation of informal communities of practice, where trainers continue to exchange resources, ideas, and challenges beyond the formal training period.

Overall, the practice contributes to the professionalisation of adult education and enhances the quality and relevance of digital and blended training provision.

Success Factors

Several key elements contributed to the success and effectiveness of *The Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* course:

- Practical and hands-on approach
  The course focuses on real tools that participants can immediately apply in their own teaching contexts, increasing relevance and motivation.
- Step-by-step progression
  Trainers are introduced to tools gradually, in a structured sequence that avoids overwhelming them with too much information at once.
- Peer learning and sharing
  Participants learn not only from the trainer but also from each other, through peer feedback, discussions, and collaborative tasks.
- Flexible and self-paced structure
  The e-learning format allows busy adult educators to learn at their own pace, with optional synchronous sessions for deeper support.
- Focus on digital pedagogy, not just tools
  Beyond learning how tools work, participants explore how to design effective learning experiences online.
- Supportive and inclusive environment
  Trainers are encouraged to ask questions, make mistakes, and reflect on their own teaching style, which creates a space for genuine growth.

These elements contribute to the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the course.

Recommendations

The Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers course is highly transferable and can be adapted to different contexts, regions, and learner profiles. It can be implemented by training centres, NGOs, public institutions, or even freelance trainers, provided the following conditions are met:

- Access to digital infrastructure
  Basic access to devices (laptop, tablet, or smartphone) and internet connection is necessary for both trainers and participants.
- Facilitators with digital and pedagogical competence
  The course should be delivered by trainers who understand both educational technology and adult learning principles.
- Customisation to the target group
  Examples, tools, and case studies should reflect the reality of participants (e.g. vocational trainers, literacy educators, community facilitators).
- Clear and intuitive LMS
  A simple and user-friendly Learning Management System (such as Moodle or Google Classroom) is essential to avoid digital barriers.
- Support mechanisms
  Providing tutorial videos, a FAQ section, or mentoring options can enhance the experience, especially for trainers less familiar with technology.

This course model is particularly recommended for adult education centres transitioning to blended learning, for new trainers entering the field, or for continuing education initiatives aimed at digital transformation.

Tips / Implementation

For organisations or facilitators planning to implement a similar practice, the following advice and checklists can support success:

Before the course

- Conduct a needs assessment to tailor content to participants' prior knowledge.
- Choose a platform with low digital barriers (e.g. Moodle, Google Classroom, or NAU).
- Prepare a welcome module with navigation tips and basic digital literacy support.
- Ensure accessibility compliance (e.g. font sizes, colour contrast, captions).

During the course

- Use microlearning units: short, focused modules work best for busy adults.
- Integrate interactive elements like quizzes, forums, or group tasks every few lessons.
- Create clear instructions and provide examples for each activity.
- Offer regular check-ins or Q&A sessions, even if short and informal.

After the course

- Encourage participants to implement what they created during the course.
- Offer optional follow-up support (mentoring, community of practice).
- Collect feedback and revise future editions based on participant input.

Tip: Always frame tools as means to enhance learning, not ends in themselves. Focus on pedagogy first.

Module 1: Digital Learning

Introduction & Rationale

Modernising adult education centres across Europe requires digital learning to move beyond a mere set of tools and become a purposeful, accessible, and human-centred learning experience. Research conducted within the XXI Adults project, including surveys with public administration, educators, managers, and adult learners across six partner countries, converges on a shared diagnosis:

1. There are infrastructural inequalities (especially in equipment and connectivity, notably in rural areas);
2. There is strong motivation among adults to develop digital competences useful for life, work, and lifelong learning;
3. Educators call for continuous, practice-oriented, and contextualised training; and
4. Issues such as digital safety and the responsible use of AI emerge as cross-cutting priorities.

At the same time, the mapping of good practices among partners shows that the most consistent results occur when technology is used to support simple, authentic, and community-based learning tasks, rather than as an end in itself.

Digital literacy circles, senior-to-senior mentoring, simulations of everyday life tasks (health, finance, e-services), digital storytelling, community hubs, and creative laboratories (FabLabs) are concrete examples of how digital learning becomes meaningful, transferable, and transformative, even on a small scale.

This evidence is reinforced by mature institutional models (e.g. shared LMS networks, OER repositories, and communities of practice) and by learner-centred methodologies such as design thinking, project-based learning, and intergenerational approaches.

The collective analysis of good practices across the XXI Adults partner organisations confirms this rationale and demonstrates that digital learning is both a tool for inclusion and a driver of pedagogical innovation.

Across countries, the good practices gathered illustrate complementary and transferable approaches:

- Portugal highlights practices focused on trainer professionalisation and the creation of humanised digital learning environments. Initiatives such as *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers, Letters for Life,* and *Back to the Future – Seniors as Digital Storyteller Gurus* combine technology, creativity, and empathy.
- Spain emphasises community-based digital learning initiatives, including *Online/In-person English Workshops and the Use of Google Tools*, which bring digital learning closer to everyday life and help reduce social isolation.
- Greece presents models of digital mentoring and peer learning, such as *Digital Literacy Circles* and *the Digital Mentorship Program*, empowering adults with low levels of digital literacy and fostering intergenerational solidarity.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has identified initiatives focused on critical media literacy, including *Digital Media Literacy Basics*, enhancing adults' capacity to critically assess and safely use online information.
- Poland documents the role of *FabLabs and Learning Hubs* as hands-on learning spaces where adults experiment with technologies and creative methods in collaborative environments.
- Germany, in turn, showcases the potential of the DVV ecosystem and its national digital platforms as examples of systemic digital integration in adult education, combining technological innovation, pedagogical support, and quality assurance.

Together, these practices reveal a clear European trend: digital learning creates lasting impact when it is meaningful, accessible, and person-centred. It supports active learning, collaboration, and community connection, fostering not only technical skills but also confidence, autonomy, and participation.

From the perspective of adult learners, survey results consistently indicate a preference for hybrid and practical learning models (online communication, e-services, document creation, spreadsheets, learning platforms), along with the need for close guidance, peer mentoring, and confidence building.

For educators and managers, the data highlight high motivation to innovate, but also limited time for design and updating, outdated equipment in some centres, and a need for short, applied, and supportive training (including educational AI, digital assessment, and accessibility).

Public administration recognises the strategic priority of digitalisation and the importance of stable funding, technical assistance, and multi-level partnerships (municipalities, universities, NGOs, and technology companies), while stressing the need for coordination and territorial equity.

For this reason, the module presents good practice examples that aim to bridge the gap between diagnosis and action, enabling individuals, teams, and centres to:

- Explore how to design simple, learner-centred digital experiences;
- Apply hybrid and microlearning strategies that combine synchronous and asynchronous elements;
- Exchange peer feedback and ideas for authentic, inclusive practice;
- Implement basic accessibility and digital safety principles as quality standards;

- Build communities of practice and mentoring networks for continuous growth;
- Embed digital learning in local realities, ensuring social relevance and sustainability.

In summary, this module draws on European good practices to offer pragmatic and inclusive entry points to digital learning, ensuring that technology remains a means of human connection rather than an end in itself within 21st-century adult education.

Recommended Digital Conditions for Implementation

Minimum requirements:

- Access to a digital device (computer, tablet, or smartphone).
- Basic internet connectivity enabling online communication and simple digital tasks.
- Familiarity with essential digital tools (e.g. e-mail, web browsing, document creation).

When possible, it is beneficial to ensure:

- A stable internet connection for synchronous sessions and collaborative work.
- Access to a shared online space or learning platform for materials and communication.
- Technical or peer support mechanisms for participants requiring additional assistance.

These conditions are intentionally flexible and can be adapted to local realities, ensuring inclusive and feasible implementation of the module across diverse contexts.

What learners will learn / Skills & Competences gained

- Develop a clearer understanding of digital learning in adult education, informed by concrete good practice examples.
- Gain increased confidence in using simple digital tools, inspired by real-world practices illustrated throughout the module.
- Conceptualise a small, context-adapted digital learning activity based on the showcased approaches.
- Strengthen awareness of core principles of safety, accessibility, and responsible digital use.
- Leave with at least one actionable idea that can be realistically applied in their centre or teaching practice.

Digital Learning Foundations: Why and How

By exploring concrete good practices and illustrative projects, learners are invited to reflect on what digital learning means in adult education — not merely as the use of technology, but as an approach to making learning more flexible, accessible, and human-centred.

By reflecting on these examples, participants are encouraged to examine their own practices and identify one realistic opportunity for digital transformation within their specific context.

Outcome: Increased awareness of the potential of digital learning as a pedagogical ally for inclusion, engagement, and learner motivation.

Designing Simple and Authentic Digital Experiences

Drawing on selected good practices and initiatives, this section encourages participants to reflect on how small, real-life digital tasks can meaningfully engage learners and support active participation.

Participants are invited to experiment with a simple digital tool and sketch a micro-activity that is relevant and adaptable to their own teaching or training context.

Outcome: Enhanced awareness and an initial ability to conceptualise a small-scale, learner-centred digital task.

Innovating with Digital Tools

Using practical examples and illustrative initiatives, participants discover creative ways of applying everyday digital tools (such as slides, quizzes, collaborative boards, and AI assistants) to support learning.

Inspired by these examples, they are encouraged to explore one tool hands-on and reflect on how creativity, ethics, and responsibility intersect in digital innovation.

Outcome: Increased confidence and awareness in using simple digital tools in creative, ethical, and responsible ways.

Mentoring and Learning Together

Based on real examples of mentoring and peer-learning practices, participants reflect on how digital mentoring can empower both educators and learners.

They are encouraged to share experiences of mutual support within their institutions and explore how online communities can foster sustained professional growth.

Outcome: Increased recognition of mentoring and collaboration as key drivers of digital confidence, inclusion, and continuous learning.

Safety, Ethics and Digital Citizenship

Through short case examples and selected good practices, participants reflect on online safety, misinformation, and the ethical use of AI in educational contexts.

They are invited to identify key practices that promote digital well-being and responsible, critical participation within their own settings.

Outcome: Increased awareness and a shared commitment to ethical, safe, and critical digital practices.

Micro-Project: From Idea to Action

Drawing on the examples and ideas explored throughout the module, participants translate one inspired idea into a simple and realistic action plan aimed at improving a digital aspect of their teaching practice or centre.

Through shared spaces such as a joint gallery or forum, they present their plans and exchange peer feedback.

Outcome: A concrete and feasible idea, inspired by identified good practices, to apply digital learning principles within their local context.

Overall Result

By completing this learning journey, participants are expected to:

- Increase their awareness and confidence in applying digital approaches to adult learning, inspired by concrete examples and good practices;
- Develop small, transferable ideas that can be realistically adapted to their own educational contexts;
- Become part of a community of educators motivated to continue exploring and reflecting on digital pedagogy;
- Contribute to a shared European vision of inclusive, human-centred digital learning.

Theoretical Justification

Digital Learning as a Pathway to Inclusion and Confidence

Digital learning has become a cornerstone of adult education, not only because it enables flexible access to learning anytime and anywhere, but because it creates new ways to participate, collaborate, and express knowledge. Its true educational value depends on how it is integrated into pedagogy — transforming technology into a meaningful and inclusive learning experience rather than an end in itself.

Evidence gathered from the six partner countries of the XXI Adults project shows that digital learning still reflects inequalities in access and confidence, particularly among older adults, people with lower educational levels, and those living in rural or disadvantaged areas. These gaps are not only technical but also social and motivational. Therefore, digital learning must be seen as a gateway to inclusion and active citizenship, helping adults participate more fully in their communities and regain confidence in their ability to learn.

According to the Council of the European Union (2021), adult learning should “empower all adults to fully participate in digital, economic, and civic life”, ensuring that the digital transition leaves no one behind.

This module addresses this challenge by focusing on:

- Improving the pedagogical use of digital technologies through human-centred, interactive approaches;
- Ensuring equity, accessibility, and motivation, by providing short, practical strategies that educators can apply immediately in their own contexts.

The Educator's Role: From Tool User to Learning Experience Facilitator

Digital transformation redefines the role of educators. Beyond mastering tools, educators become facilitators of digital learning experiences — professionals who plan short, hybrid activities, create participatory environments, and integrate digital tools ethically and purposefully.

This approach draws on the principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1984) and heutagogy (Hase & Kenyon, 2000), which emphasise autonomy, self-direction, and learning through experience. In digital contexts, adults learn best when they control their pace, see immediate relevance, and receive meaningful feedback.

This module highlights four guiding principles that educators can adopt in their daily practice:

- Authenticity – real-life tasks that make learning relevant;
- Reflectivity – using error, feedback, and self-assessment as opportunities for growth;
- Collaboration – transforming digital spaces into environments for shared learning;
- Accessibility – designing learning that includes everyone, regardless of technical or social barriers.

European Frameworks and Policy Alignment

The *Digital Learning* module aligns closely with European priorities and reference frameworks that guide adult education:

- DigComp 2.2 (European Commission, 2022) — outlining competences in information literacy, communication, digital creation, safety, and problem-solving;
- DigCompEdu — defining how educators can integrate technologies meaningfully into teaching and learning;
- New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021–2030 (Council of the EU, 2021) — setting the goal that at least 80% of adults should possess basic digital skills by 2030.

Rather than focusing on tool mastery, this Module translates these frameworks into short, pedagogically grounded strategies that foster digital awareness, confidence, and ethical use.

Innovation and Hybrid Learning as Opportunities for Change

Innovation in adult learning is not measured by the number of tools used, but by how technology enhances participation and meaning. Combining synchronous and asynchronous moments, or blending in-person and online activities, helps learners stay connected and engaged.

European studies (Baltacı, 2025; Ruuskanen-Parrukoski, 2020) confirm that even light, well-structured hybrid models increase motivation and inclusion — provided there is human and pedagogical support.

- Good practices collected through the XXI Adults project illustrate this balance:
- Digital literacy circles and intergenerational mentoring (Greece, Portugal);
- Community-based creative laboratories (Poland, Germany, Spain);
- Media literacy initiatives (Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- Digital storytelling projects (Portugal, Greece).

Across all these examples, technology amplifies educators' impact — it does not replace them.

Ethics, Safety, and Trust in the Digital Space

Digitalisation in education must always be accompanied by ethical awareness. Issues such as data protection, privacy, responsible use of AI, misinformation, and digital well-being require conscious attention and deliberate pedagogical action.

Integrating these themes into activities also means promoting digital citizenship and online safety as essential competences for all educators and learners. The goal is to develop informed, critical, and responsible users who know how to act safely and collaboratively in digital environments.

Synthesis: A Human Path Towards Digital Confidence

Integrating digital technologies in adult education is, above all, a human process of change. This module proposes a realistic and motivating path to:

- Empower educators as facilitators and designers of meaningful learning experiences;
- Make digital learning a tool for inclusion, confidence, and participation;
- Foster communities of practice and peer support;
- Ensure that the digital transition in adult learning remains a human-centred transition.

Ultimately, digital learning fulfils its purpose when it connects people, expands opportunities, and builds trust in lifelong learning.

Good practices

1st Good Practice: Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers

Context and Background

The digital transition in adult education in Portugal brought new challenges for trainers and educators, many of whom had solid experience in face-to-face contexts but limited familiarity with digital pedagogies and tools.

The project *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers,* identified and documented by Empoderar as a relevant good practice, addresses this gap by empowering adult education trainers with the digital and pedagogical competences needed to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful online and blended learning.

This initiative forms part of the broader national and European agenda to modernise adult education and promote quality, inclusive and human-centred e-learning. It aligns with the European Union's priorities for lifelong learning and digital competence frameworks (DigComp and DigCompEdu), focusing on training educators to integrate technology ethically and purposefully into their teaching.

Objectives

- Strengthen trainers' digital and pedagogical competences for online and hybrid learning environments.
- Promote the critical and ethical use of digital technologies in education.

- Improve the quality of online communication and interaction between trainers and learners.
- Develop instructional design and formative assessment methodologies adapted to e-learning.
- Build a community of practice for peer exchange, collaboration, and continuous professional development.

Implementation

The course was structured as a blended learning programme, combining synchronous online sessions led by expert trainers with asynchronous activities on an e-learning platform. Participants were introduced to a variety of content areas, including:

- Principles of online and blended learning;
- Pedagogical planning and structuring of digital modules;
- Effective use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) and multimedia tools for learning;
- Motivation and learner engagement in digital contexts;
- Formative and feedback-based assessment in e-learning;
- Accessibility and inclusion standards in virtual environments.

A strong emphasis was placed on learning by doing: participants actively experimented with tools such as Canva, Moodle, Mentimeter, Quizziz, and Nearpod, applying them to micro-projects that simulated real-world teaching scenarios. Collaborative reflection and peer review were integral parts of the process.

Results and Impact

- Trainers from different institutions completed the course and reported a significant increase in digital confidence and pedagogical creativity.
- Creation of open educational resources (OER) and reusable models for digital teaching activities.
- Noticeable improvement in learner engagement and interaction in online sessions, with trainers adopting more collaborative and experiential methods.
- Formation of a network of e-learning trainers, enabling peer support and the continued exchange of practices beyond the course duration.
- Contribution to the modernisation of adult learning provision in Portugal, demonstrating that technology can enhance, rather than replace, the human and relational dimension of teaching.

Conclusion

This good practice illustrates that training the trainers is the foundation of quality digital learning. Beyond developing technical skills, *Techniques and Tools for E-Learning Trainers* contributes to shaping a professional identity aligned with the demands of digital-age education — reflective, creative, inclusive, and learner – centred.

The model is easily transferable to other European contexts and represents an inspiring example of how digital transformation can strengthen the human and pedagogical core of adult education.

2nd Good Practice: Digital Literacy Circles for Older Adults

Context and Background

In recent years, the rapid digitalisation of daily life in Greece, from communication and access to services, to participation in civic activities, has exposed deep gaps in digital literacy, particularly among adults aged 50 and above. Many older adults lack not only the necessary technical skills but also the confidence and motivation to engage with digital tools.

The initiative *"Digital Literacy Circles for Older Adults"*, identified and documented by E-SCHOOL Educational Group as a relevant good practice, addresses this gap by promoting peer-supported, inclusive, and hands-on digital learning. It aligns with the European policy goal of ensuring that every adult acquires basic digital skills (Council of the EU, 2021; European Commission, 2022) and addresses the social isolation that can arise from digital exclusion.

By organising small, supportive learning circles, the programme creates an environment where older adults can learn at their own pace, ask questions freely, and receive guidance from trained mentors and peers who share similar experiences.

Objectives

- Strengthen basic digital competences among older adults to enable participation in modern digital society.
- Build confidence and autonomy in using digital tools for everyday life (communication, online services, information search).
- Encourage peer learning and intergenerational exchange, where participants learn from and support each other.
- Promote social inclusion and reduce isolation through group-based digital activities.
- Foster a sense of active citizenship and lifelong learning motivation.

Implementation

The programme was delivered through local learning circles established in community centres, libraries, and senior associations across several Greek regions. Each circle consisted of 6–8 participants guided by a facilitator trained in adult education and digital pedagogy.

The methodology combined face-to-face workshops with guided online practice, following a progression from basic to intermediate skills. Key content areas included:

- Using smartphones and tablets safely and efficiently;
- Internet navigation, e-mail, and video-calling;
- Accessing public services and health information online;
- Online communication and social media for maintaining family and community ties;

- Identifying reliable information and recognising misinformation.

Peer mentoring played a central role: participants alternated between learner and mentor roles, reinforcing collaboration and shared responsibility for learning.
Practical tasks were drawn from **real-life situations** (e.g. sending an e-mail, booking an appointment online, or managing a digital form), ensuring immediate relevance.

Results and Impact

- Over 150 older adults successfully completed the training, demonstrating improved confidence and competence in using digital tools.
- Participants reported a greater sense of independence and connection with family and community, reducing social isolation.
- Facilitators observed increased motivation for continuous learning and stronger intergenerational bonds, as many participants shared new skills with relatives or friends.
- The initiative fostered trust and community solidarity, turning local learning circles into spaces for mutual support.
- The model was recognised by local authorities and adult learning networks as an effective, low-cost approach to digital inclusion.

Conclusion

Digital Literacy Circles for Older Adults exemplify how digital learning can be inclusive, social, and empowering. By focusing on mentoring, collaboration, and authenticity, the practice demonstrates that digital competence is not merely technical, but also emotional and relational – a key to participation and well-being in later life.

Its success lies in combining hands-on practice with empathy and community spirit, making it a transferable model for adult education across Europe. For the XXI ADULTS framework, it reinforces the importance of building digital learning communities that nurture confidence, connection, and active citizenship.

3rd Good Practice: Digital Media Literacy Basics – Empowering Adults for Critical Use of Online Information

Context and Background

In today's digital world, adults are constantly exposed to an overwhelming flow of online information, including misinformation, manipulation, and extremist narratives. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in many European countries, a considerable number of adults lack the competences to critically evaluate digital content, recognise biased information, or identify safe and reliable sources.

The programme *Digital Media Literacy Basics*, identified and documented by BRAVO (Bosnian Representative Association for Valuable Opportunities) as a relevant good practice, responds to this challenge by empowering adults to engage with digital media in a critical, responsible, and ethical manner.
The initiative builds on European frameworks such as DigComp 2.2 and contributes to the priorities of

the European Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) by fostering digital inclusion, critical thinking, and resilience against misinformation.

Objectives

- Strengthen media and digital literacy competences among adult learners.
- Enable participants to critically evaluate online content and recognise manipulation techniques.
- Reduce the risks of digital misinformation and social exclusion.
- Promote intergenerational dialogue and community discussion on responsible media use.
- Equip adult educators with practical tools to integrate media literacy into their teaching.

Implementation

The programme was delivered through interactive workshops and blended sessions, combining theory with practical, hands-on activities. Participants included adult learners from diverse educational backgrounds, educators, and community representatives.

Main learning activities included:

- Identifying fake news and analysing real examples of misinformation.
- Exploring how algorithms, advertising, and social media influence perception and decision-making.
- Group discussions on ethical communication and digital behaviour.
- Peer-learning activities between younger and older adults to share experience and perspectives.
- Reflection tasks promoting critical thinking and self-awareness in the digital environment.

The workshops were facilitated by trained educators using participatory methods such as case studies, media analysis, and collaborative problem-solving. The materials were adapted for varying levels of digital competence to ensure accessibility for all participants.

Results and Impact

- Participants reported significant improvement in recognising unreliable information and applying critical thinking when consuming online content.
- Increased awareness of ethical and responsible digital behaviour, including respect for privacy, data protection, and constructive online communication.
- Strengthened intergenerational understanding: younger adults contributed digital know-how, while older participants brought life experience and critical reflection.
- Educators gained practical methodologies to integrate digital and media literacy into adult education curricula.

- The initiative contributed to social resilience and inclusion, reducing vulnerability to misinformation and polarisation.

Conclusion

Digital Media Literacy Basics illustrates how digital education can promote both competence and consciousness. By combining practical training with ethical reflection, it helps adults navigate the digital world safely, responsibly, and critically.

This good practice reinforces that digital learning is not solely about technological skills, but about fostering critical citizens capable of evaluating information, building trust, and contributing positively to democratic life. For the XXI ADULTS framework, it represents the ethical and civic dimension of digital learning, ensuring that innovation is always accompanied by reflection, empathy, and responsibility.

Module 2: Creativity & Innovation

Introduction & Rationale

In the rapidly changing 21st century, creativity and innovation have become essential competences for lifelong learning and active participation in society. Adult education institutions across Europe are increasingly challenged to cultivate these skills among both educators and learners, in order to respond to the demands of the knowledge economy and digital transformation (Council of the European Union, 2021; Tsai, 2012).

Principals, teachers, and staff in adult education — particularly those seeking to modernise their institutions — recognise that fostering creative thinking and embracing innovative methodologies are key to delivering education aligned with contemporary standards. Adult learners, including older adults aged 50–75 from vulnerable backgrounds, also benefit significantly from opportunities to develop creativity and digital competence, enabling them to adapt to technological and social change.

European policy reinforces these priorities: adult learning is viewed not only as a means to improve employability and social inclusion, but also as a driver of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship (Council of the European Union, 2008; 2021).

Within the XXI Adults project, which focuses on modernising adult education in response to digital and societal transformation, this module serves as a bridge between traditional pedagogical approaches and the innovative practices required in a rapidly evolving environment. In contexts where adult education struggles to keep pace with technological and social change, fostering creativity among educators and learners becomes central to adaptability, engagement, and lifelong learning.

Research conducted within the XXI Adults project, based on surveys among adult learners, teachers, managers, and public administrations, has highlighted:

1. Learner needs and trends

- High interest in AI, creative tools, and emerging technologies.
- Strong demand for personalised, flexible, and innovative learning formats.

2. Educator competences

- Increasing experimentation with AI and digital tools in teaching practice.
- Growing use of creative technologies (e.g. Canva, video editing, multimedia production).
- Need for integrated training that combines digital, creative, and soft skills development.

3. Institutional and system – level innovation

- Public administrations call for modern infrastructure, strategic planning, and inclusive innovation.
- Innovation must balance digital tools with creativity, communication, and critical thinking.

4. Pedagogical Approaches

- Hands-on and applied activities foster creativity and innovation.
- Hybrid and interactive learning environments best support innovative practice.

Following this rationale, the module introduces participants to both the principles and practical application of creativity and innovation in adult learning. It combines theoretical foundations with examples of good practices gathered from project partners across Europe, showcasing strategies, tools, and methods that have enhanced engagement and learning outcomes in adult education centres.

What learners will learn / Skills & Competences gained

Adult learners, especially those in the 50–75 age group and from vulnerable backgrounds with limited digital skills, gain a range of competences that empower them to participate actively in the digital society and enhance their well-being:

1. Digital literacy and creative confidence – learners develop fundamental digital skills and overcome technophobia, which is crucial given that lack of digital competence can cause especially older adults to feel excluded and frustrated (Fernández-Piqueras, González-García, Sanz-Ponce, & Calero-Plaza, 2025). This digital divide is addressed by providing a supportive, hands – on environment for experimenting with technology.
2. Creative thinking and problem – solving skills – by learning techniques such as brainstorming, mind-mapping, or using digital media to express ideas, adults, especially older, strengthen their ability to approach personal and community challenges with creativity and flexibility. Importantly, this creative empowerment contributes to their self – efficacy and can improve quality of life – studies have shown that creative engagement in older adults is linked to better cognitive health, reduced isolation, and a sense of purpose (Ross, Lachmann, Jaarsveld, Riedel-Heller, &Rodriguez, 2023).
3. Design thinking and innovation mindset – by engaging in simplified design-thinking processes — empathising with users, generating ideas, prototyping, and testing — learners apply structured creativity to real-world situations, developing a practical and solution-oriented mindset.
4. Collaboration and social creativity – participants build skills in collaborative creativity through group projects and peer learning, both in-person and via accessible digital platforms. They

practise sharing ideas, giving and receiving feedback, and co-creating solutions. This aligns with the European Digital Competence Framework's emphasis on creatively using digital technologies individually and collectively to innovate (European Commission, 2022).

5. Cultural and personal expression – learners expand their capacity for personal expression and lifelong learning through creative endeavours. Many participants discover new outlets for creativity – such as digital storytelling, photography, or arts – that enable them to share their life experiences and cultural knowledge. Adult education experts note that *finding new ways to learn and a positive attitude towards technology open up opportunities for everyday creativity* in later life (Ruuskanen-Parrukoski, 2020).

Theoretical Justification

Fostering Creativity in Adult Learning

Creativity is widely recognized as a key capacity for adults to navigate change (Tsai, 2012). European authorities emphasise that education and training at all levels should develop learners' creative and innovative capacities, which in turn contribute to sustainable economic and social development (Council of the European Union, 2008). Research also shows that adult learning can spark personal transformation – for example, workers engaged in continuous learning tend to be more creative and productive, underscoring the value of creativity for employability and active citizenship (Tsai, 2012).

Studies indicate that student – centred, autonomous, and supportive learning environments are most conducive to developing creative capacity (Tsai, 2012). In practical terms, this means educators should encourage learners to generate ideas without fear of criticism, promote open-ended problem solving, and allow for experimentation. Key strategies to spur creative thinking include the use of group discussions and collaborative projects, brainstorming sessions, role-playing scenarios, creative writing exercises, and problem – based learning activities.

Such methods leverage experiential and often playful learning, which research shows is linked to creative outcomes. Just as important are the interpersonal qualities of the teacher: friendly, encouraging, and enthusiastic teaching styles have been found to significantly influence learners' creative success (Tsai, 2012).

A supportive atmosphere is crucial. Creativity blossoms when learners feel safe to take risks and think outside the box without the fear of failure or ridicule. Adult educators are advised to establish a climate of trust, where novel ideas are welcomed and mistakes are seen as learning opportunities. Motivation is indeed a core factor: intrinsically motivated learners (those driven by curiosity and personal interest) tend to be more creative. Thus, adult educators should strive to tap into learners' passions and real-life experiences, making learning personally meaningful.

Design Thinking as a Creative Problem-Solving Method

What is Design Thinking? Design Thinking is a human – centred approach to innovation and problem-solving that has gained traction in education. In an educational context, this approach emphasises empathy with learners or end-users, encourages out-of-the-box ideation, and balances analytical thinking with creative thinking (Boubaris, 2020). Key elements of the design thinking mindset include: empathy, playful collaboration, creative confidence, and learning from failure (Boubaris, 2020).

The reason design thinking is seen as so promising is that it centres on deep understanding of learners' needs. By employing design thinking techniques (like empathy mapping, personas, and rapid prototyping of learning activities), educators can identify pain points and desires of their adult learners and innovate accordingly.

Innovation through Technology in Adult Education

Technological advancement has profoundly impacted adult learning, opening up new possibilities for how, where, and what adults learn. Digital tools and platforms are widely seen as catalysts for innovation in education, enabling more flexible, personalised, and engaging learning experiences (Baltacı, 2025). This is particularly important for adult learners, who often need to balance education with work and personal responsibilities. Online and digital learning solutions allow adults to access education anytime, anywhere, which increases opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.

A major aspect of innovation through technology is ensuring that all adults – including older learners – can participate in the digital era. Currently, Europe faces a significant generational digital divide. Only one in four older Europeans (aged 65–74) have at least basic digital skills (UNECE, 2022). This means that innovative use of technology in adult education must go hand in hand with efforts to improve digital literacy among older learners. The European Union has set an ambitious goal: by 2030, at least 80% of adults should have basic digital skills (Joint Research Centre, 2025). Yet as of 2024, only about 55.6% of the adult population meets that level.

Reaching the 80% target will require targeted initiatives to engage those who are currently left behind – notably vulnerable groups such as low-educated adults, those in rural areas, and older people. European policy documents stress the need for tailored training and support for these groups, recognizing that older populations and individuals with limited digital exposure need specific attention in digital upskilling efforts.

Embracing technology in adult education is not just about teaching digital skills; it's also about leveraging cutting-edge tools to enhance learning across all subjects. Several edtech trends are shaping adult learning in Europe and beyond (Baltacı, 2025):

- Mobile learning – smartphones have made mobile learning a powerful tool. Adults can now learn on the go through apps that deliver interactive micro-lessons. This anytime/anywhere access helps integrate learning into daily life.
- Blended learning – combining online and face-to-face instruction offers the best of both worlds, allowing adults to benefit from classroom support while fitting learning around work schedules.
- Personalized and AI-driven learning – AI-based systems can adapt content to the learner's level and provide feedback. Such tools are valuable in addressing the diverse needs of adult learners.
- Immersive technologies (VR/AR) – these technologies simulate real-world scenarios for hands-on practice. Pilot projects in Europe have used VR for vocational training and cultural education.
- Online platforms and open resources – on-demand online course platforms and open educational resources (OER) expand access to lifelong learning.

While technology brings many benefits, innovation in adult learning is most effective when technology is used inclusively and thoughtfully. Educators need training and support to integrate new tools effectively. There is also a risk that those with low digital skills could be further left behind. Innovative programmes in Europe pair technology introduction with capacity-building. The human element remains crucial – technology is an enabler, but not a substitute for the motivation, guidance, and social interaction that drive adult learning (Council of the European Union, 2021).

Good practices

1st Good Practice: FabLab Gdańsk powered by Orange

Context and Background

FabLab Gdańsk powered by Orange is an open and free educational space that offers adult learners the opportunity to develop practical skills in areas such as 3D printing, CAD design, electronics, and woodworking. Based on a "learning by doing" approach, the practice enables participants to learn through making and experimenting, regardless of their previous experience with technology. The main goal is to enhance digital, technical, and social competences, support local community engagement, and reduce educational and digital exclusion. The practice is aimed at the general adult population in Gdańsk, including people returning to the labour market, older adults, women, and anyone interested in creative use of modern technology.

The creation *of FabLab Gdańsk powered by Orange* was a response to the growing need for open, inclusive access to technological education and digital tools among people of all ages – especially adults who were previously excluded from such opportunities. In the rapidly changing world of work and technology, many adults face barriers related to lack of experience, confidence, or access to tools and training. These include older adults, women returning to the labour market, the unemployed, and people with low or outdated technical skills.

The target group of the *FabLab* includes the general adult population of Gdańsk and surrounding areas, particularly individuals looking to gain hands-on experience with digital fabrication tools such as 3D printers, CNC milling machines, or laser cutters, as well as those interested in electronics, woodworking, or digital design.

Objectives

- Improve digital and technical competences among adult learners, including 3D modelling, electronics, laser cutting, CNC milling, and the use of CAD software.
- Provide inclusive and accessible learning opportunities for adults who may not participate in formal education.
- Encourage "learning by doing" and creative problem-solving through project-based activities.
- Foster community engagement and collaboration.
- Reduce the digital divide.
- Support creativity and innovation.
- Contribute to lifelong learning through informal education that promotes curiosity, confidence, and continuous development.

Implementation

The implementation of *FabLab Gdańsk powered by Orange* was based on adapting the international FabLab model to local community needs. The process was carried out in cooperation between the Orange Foundation, the City of Gdańsk, and the FabLab Gdańsk Association, and consisted of several key stages including launching open access and community engagement and sustaining and expanding activities.

Results and Impact

- Hundreds of adults have participated in free workshops focused on 3D printing, digital design, electronics, woodworking, and CNC technology, increasing their confidence in using modern tools and software.
- The initiative has reduced digital exclusion by reaching individuals who previously lacked access to technological education.
- A strong and inclusive community of makers and learners has been established. Many participants report increased self-confidence, creativity, and a stronger sense of agency in shaping their learning paths or re-entering the labour market.
- The practice has been recognised as a successful model of informal adult education.

Conclusion

FabLab Gdańsk fosters innovation and creativity by providing adults with hands-on access to modern tools and technologies, encouraging experimentation, problem-solving, and making. Its "learning by doing" approach empowers diverse learners to design, create, and test ideas while building confidence and expanding digital, technical, and creative competences within an inclusive community space.

The FabLab model is transferable to various local contexts, including urban centres, rural areas, schools, libraries, and community hubs. *FabLab Gdańsk* demonstrates that even relatively small-scale initiatives — when based on cooperation and shared values — can generate meaningful and lasting impact in adult education. Future implementations should ensure accessibility, diversity of learners, and long-term sustainability.

2nd Good Practice: Community Learning Hubs – Duisburg

Context and Background

The Community Learning Hubs in Duisburg are safe, inclusive neighbourhood – based educational spaces offering literacy, German language, and numeracy classes to Roma youth and their families. Designed as bridges to formal education and vocational training, these hubs address intergenerational barriers to learning, especially for those with low educational backgrounds, by providing flexible, community – embedded support.

Many Roma families in Duisburg live in densely populated urban districts with limited access to public services. In these areas, youth and adults often face exclusion from mainstream education due to low language proficiency, lack of prior schooling, housing insecurity, and structural antigypsyism. Public

institutions struggled to reach these communities due to mutual mistrust, cultural barriers, and logistical constraints. In response, local NGOs (such as BildungsWerkstatt Duisburg and Integra Duisburg e.V.), in partnership with the city's integration office, initiated the Community Learning Hubs as a grassroots, intercultural learning approach.

The target group is Roma youth (14–27) and their families, particularly those living in segregated districts and not enrolled in formal education or employment.

Objectives

- To build foundational literacy and numeracy skills among Roma youth and adults
- To improve confidence and motivation for learning
- To support integration into the vocational and educational system
- To strengthen family-based learning and social cohesion
- To create community trust and partnership with educational institutions

Implementation

- Establishment of local hubs: Spaces rented and converted into friendly, culturally sensitive learning centres.
- Community outreach: Local Roma facilitators engaged families door-to-door and through community events to explain the offer and encourage enrolment.
- Flexible learning activities: Small-group sessions held twice a week, including:
  – basic reading and writing in German
  – everyday maths and budgeting
  – navigating health, school, and employment-related documents
  – German conversation and role-play for daily life
- Family inclusion: parents and older siblings were invited to joint learning sessions, encouraging intergenerational education.
- Bridge to formal systems: after 6 to 9 months, learners showing readiness were referred to formal language schools, job centres, or youth vocational programmes.

Results and Impact

- Over 150 Roma learners participated in the programme over two years.
- 40+ transitioned to formal German integration or VET preparation courses
- Increased attendance and punctuality
- Significant improvement in basic reading and speaking abilities
- Strengthened family participation in school-related matters (e.g., parent meetings)

Conclusion

The Community Learning Hubs promote innovation and creativity by offering flexible, community – embedded learning adapted to participants' needs. By creating safe spaces where Roma youth and families can explore literacy and language through culturally responsive methods, the hubs foster confidence, curiosity, and new learning pathways beyond traditional classroom structures.

The model is transferable to other cities with high concentrations of Roma or marginalised migrant populations. Key conditions include community – based locations, trust – building outreach through Roma mediators, and strong collaboration with local authorities.

3rd Good Practice: Human-Centred Innovation through Design Thinking (HPI School of Design Thinking, Potsdam)

Context and Background

This good practice is a creative learning model that empowers adult learners, including professionals, educators, and innovators, to solve complex real – world problems using the Design Thinking methodology. Offered by the Hasso Plattner Institute, the programme provides a blended, hands-on educational experience where participants work in diverse teams to co-create solutions to challenges from business, education, or civil society. Through a structured process of empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing, learners gain key 21st-century competences such as digital literacy, innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship. The goal is to build creative confidence and equip adults with the tools and mindsets needed to drive innovation in their communities, organizations, and careers.

As societies and labour markets grow more complex and digital, adults in professional and civic contexts increasingly lack the creative and collaborative problem – solving skills needed to address uncertain, rapidly evolving challenges. Traditional adult education models often emphasise theoretical learning and individual performance, failing to prepare learners for the real – world, team-based innovation environments found in today's economy and society.

The primary target group includes adult learners such as professionals, educators, entrepreneurs, and public sector workers from a wide variety of disciplines. The programme also reaches people in mid-career or those transitioning between sectors who seek to develop innovation capabilities and digital collaboration skills.

Objectives

- Equip adults with tools and mindsets for creative, human – centred problem-solving.
- Foster digital and collaborative competences essential for innovation.
- Encourage cross-sector, interdisciplinary cooperation.
- Bridge the gap between academic thinking and real-world application.
- Move participants from linear, solution-focused thinking to iterative, user – centred approaches.
- Cultivate a culture of experimentation and empathy in professional and educational contexts.
- Promote new attitudes toward teamwork and failure as part of the learning process.

Implementation

- Participant selection – a diverse cohort is selected based on motivation, background diversity (sector, age, discipline), and openness to new learning models.
- Onboarding & training – initial workshops introduce the design thinking framework and collaborative tools (both physical and digital, such as Miro, Zoom, and prototyping kits).
- Team formation – small, interdisciplinary teams of 5–6 people are created and matched with real-world challenges from partner organizations.
- Project work – teams go through the five design thinking phases—Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and test—using agile and creative methods.
- Coaching & reflection – teams are supported by trained coaches and facilitators who guide their process and encourage meta-learning and reflection.
- Final presentations & iteration – results are shared with external stakeholders; feedback leads to further refinements or real-world implementation.

Key Methods Used

- Rapid prototyping
- User interviews and empathy mapping
- Brainstorming techniques
- Feedback cycles
- Digital whiteboards and collaboration tools

Results and Impact

- Over 3,000 professionals trained in design thinking and digital collaboration since the programme's inception.
- Numerous practical solutions developed in areas such as healthcare, urban mobility, education, and environmental sustainability.
- Participants reported increased creative confidence, improved collaboration skills, and greater willingness to take initiative.
- Many described transformative changes in their leadership and teamwork approaches.
- Alumni introduced design thinking into their own institutions, multiplying the programme's long-term impact.

Conclusion

This Design Thinking programme fosters innovation and creativity by immersing adults in a hands-on process of empathy, ideation, and rapid prototyping. Working in diverse teams, participants co-create real-world solutions, strengthening digital skills, creative confidence, and entrepreneurial mindsets while learning to approach challenges with experimentation and collaboration.

Design thinking is a globally transferable model adaptable to adult education centres, NGOs, public administration, and corporate environments. Conditions for successful implementation are: skilled facilitators or coaches trained in design thinking, a flexible learning space (physical or virtual) conducive to experimentation, real-world challenges sourced from the local context, and willingness of institutions to embrace open-ended, non-linear learning process.

Module 3: Social & Intergenerational Learning

Introduction & Rationale

The XXI Adults research findings clearly demonstrate that intergenerational learning is both a necessity and an opportunity for adult education in Europe today. Survey data from six partner countries show a highly diverse learner population, ranging from young adults to seniors aged 75+, with equally diverse education levels and employment statuses. This confirms that adult education must respond to broad intergenerational needs and realities.

Learners emphasised the importance of social connection, empathy, and belonging as motivators for joining training activities, alongside career development and digital inclusion. For many older adults, isolation and digital exclusion remain significant barriers, while younger adults often seek skills that foster employability and participation in modern society. Teachers and managers reported similar concerns, stressing that adult education centers need tools to strengthen inclusion, cooperation, and adaptability across generations.

The good practices collected further reinforce this evidence. For example, initiatives such as *Authentic Learning for Intergenerational Cooperation* (Poland) and *EduSenior* (Poland) demonstrate how structured collaboration between youth and seniors creates stronger communities, combats age-related stereotypes, and develops essential skills like communication, empathy, and civic participation.

Likewise, the *Digital Mentorship Programme: Seniors Learning from Peers* (Greece) and *Digital Ambassadors in the Neighborhood* (Greece) highlight how peer-to-peer and intergenerational approaches help learners of different ages share knowledge, reduce digital divides, and foster trust.

These practices show that intergenerational learning is not only socially valuable but pedagogically effective. Adults learn best when engaged in authentic, real-life tasks that encourage cooperation,

reflection, and dialogue across age groups. Projects rooted in mutual respect and active participation help build lasting competences, both digital and social, while strengthening local communities.

In this sense, Module 3 is designed to:

- Promote social inclusion through intergenerational cooperation.
- Address barriers of isolation, exclusion, and digital inequality faced especially by seniors and vulnerable groups.
- Provide educators with methods and tools to facilitate intergenerational learning in practical, learner – centred ways.
- Demonstrate how mutual learning between younger and older adults can support employability, civic engagement, and lifelong learning.

By drawing on research evidence and proven good practices, this module positions Social & Intergenerational Learning as a cornerstone of the XXI Adults Training Guide, ensuring that adult education in the 21st century remains inclusive, innovative, and community – driven.

What learners will learn / Skills & Competences gained

This module focuses on practical skills that help build meaningful connections between generations. Below are the main learning outcomes and competences participants are expected to develop.

Empathy, Inclusion & Communication

Through this module, participants explore how meaningful intergenerational learning can be built on empathy, dialogue, and mutual respect. They develop the ability to recognise the importance of active listening and inclusive communication, while identifying and addressing risks of social exclusion within their communities. By practising constructive dialogue and basic conflict-resolution strategies across age groups, they strengthen their social competences, emotional intelligence, and communication skills.

Intergenerational Cooperation & Peer Learning

Participants also learn how to design and facilitate activities that actively engage both younger and older learners. Through peer mentoring, co-creation, storytelling, and learning-by-doing approaches, they experience collaboration across generations and learn to value diverse perspectives and life experiences. This process strengthens their abilities in teamwork, mediation, and intergenerational dialogue.

Digital Inclusion & Mentorship

A strong emphasis is placed on digital inclusion and mentorship. Participants gain practical strategies to support seniors and vulnerable groups in bridging the digital divide, while developing mentoring and facilitation skills. By using accessible digital tools such as video-conferencing platforms, collaborative design applications, and social media, they learn how technology can become a bridge

between generations rather than a barrier. This enhances their digital competences, adaptability, and confidence in guiding others.

Civic Engagement & Lifelong Learning

Finally, the module encourages participants to connect intergenerational learning with civic engagement and lifelong development. They are guided to design small-scale community initiatives that bring generations together, strengthen active citizenship, and foster social responsibility. In doing so, they build leadership skills, civic competences, and a learning-to-learn mindset that supports continuous personal and professional growth.

Theoretical Justification

Social and intergenerational learning thrives on communication, cooperation, and shared experiences between different age groups. Yet, in today's world, much of this exchange takes place in digital environments. The XXI Adults research confirms that adults across Europe show very diverse levels of digital competence: while younger generations often use online platforms fluently, many seniors face barriers such as lack of confidence, limited access to devices, or difficulties with online safety. This digital divide not only separates generations but also risks deepening social exclusion if not addressed.

For this reason, digital competences are a cornerstone of intergenerational education. They provide the common language and tools that allow learners of different ages to collaborate, share stories, and support each other. Good practices such as *The Digital Mentorship Programme* (Greece) and *Digital Media Literacy Basics* (Bosnia and Herzegovina) demonstrate how intergenerational peer learning in the digital sphere helps seniors gain confidence while empowering younger participants to act as facilitators and mentors. These approaches turn digital skills into bridges, reducing stereotypes, increasing empathy, and strengthening social ties.

At the same time, digital competences expand the scope of intergenerational learning beyond local contexts. They enable participants to connect across borders, engage in online communities, and co-create projects that reflect both traditional knowledge and modern innovation. By learning together, generations can exchange life experience with technical know-how, ensuring that no group is left behind in the digital transition.

In this sense, digital competences matter for Module 3 because they are not simply technical abilities, but enablers of inclusion, dialogue, and solidarity. They allow adults of all ages to participate equally, learn from one another, and contribute actively to their communities. Strengthening digital skills within social and intergenerational learning therefore supports the broader mission of the XXI Adults project: to create an adult education system that is inclusive, future-oriented, and firmly rooted in cooperation across generations.

Good practices

1st Good Practice: Authentic Learning for Intergenerational Cooperation

Context and Background

In many European communities, seniors and young people live side by side but have limited opportunities to collaborate. Seniors often experience social isolation or feel undervalued, while younger people lack meaningful ways to engage in community life. The project *Authentic Learning for Intergenerational Cooperation* was designed in response to these challenges, with the goal of connecting different generations through joint learning and community initiatives.

Objectives

- Strengthen intergenerational ties by bringing together youth and seniors as equal partners.
- Promote authentic learning through real-life tasks and community projects.
- Develop social and civic competences such as empathy, teamwork, and active citizenship.
- Reduce stereotypes between generations and foster mutual respect.

Implementation

The initiative involved ten schools and ten senior groups in the Silesian region of Poland. Mixed-age teams were formed and supported by mentors to design and implement local actions based on community needs. Activities included cultural events, ecological initiatives, and educational workshops. Over several months, 20 local projects were carried out, supported by mentoring, funding, and training sessions.

Results and Impact

- More than 220 participants engaged in intergenerational activities, reporting stronger social and communication skills.
- 96% of participants said the project helped them better understand the value of intergenerational cooperation.
- Seniors reported feeling more active, valued, and connected, while youth expressed appreciation for the wisdom and experience of older generations.
- Several groups decided to continue their cooperation beyond the project's formal timeline.

This practice demonstrates how intergenerational learning builds bridges between age groups while addressing risks of isolation and exclusion. It also highlights the importance of learning by doing, where participants actively co-create meaningful community initiatives. For Module 3, this example shows how structured intergenerational cooperation can be integrated into adult education to develop both social competences and lifelong learning motivation.

2nd Good Practice: Digital Mentorship Programme: Seniors Learning from Peers

Context and Background

One of the major barriers for older adults in today's society is the digital divide. Many seniors lack the confidence, skills, or support to use digital tools effectively, which limits their ability to stay connected, access services, or participate in community life. The *Digital Mentorship Programme* was created in Greece to address this issue by empowering seniors to learn directly from their peers and younger generations.

Objectives

- Reduce digital exclusion among older adults by providing accessible, peer-led learning opportunities.
- Strengthen social bonds by encouraging mentorship and knowledge exchange across generations.
- Build seniors' confidence in using digital tools for communication, information, and everyday tasks.
- Promote lifelong learning and community solidarity.

Implementation

The programme trained senior volunteers and younger mentors to support peers in learning digital basics such as email, video calls, online banking, and safe internet use. Learning circles and one-on-one sessions were organized in community centres, libraries, and local NGOs. The method emphasised hands-on practice, patience, and repetition, ensuring that participants could apply skills in real-life situations.

Results and Impact

- Seniors gained practical digital skills that improved their daily lives (e.g., contacting family online, managing e-services).
- Participants reported higher self-confidence, reduced fear of technology, and stronger motivation to continue learning.
- Intergenerational mentoring fostered empathy, respect, and stronger community relationships.
- The programme created a sustainable network of digital mentors, ensuring ongoing peer support beyond the project's initial phase.

This good practice illustrates how digital competences are central to intergenerational learning. By combining social interaction with practical digital training, it not only reduces exclusion but also empowers seniors to participate more fully in society. For Module 3, this example shows how mentorship and peer learning can transform the digital divide into an opportunity for connection, empowerment, and solidarity.

3rd Good Practice: Digital Media Literacy Basics – Empowering Adults for Critical Use of Online Information

Context and Background

With the rapid growth of online platforms, adults are increasingly exposed to misinformation, manipulative content, and extremist narratives. Many learners, especially older adults or those with fewer opportunities, lack the skills to critically evaluate online information. This gap not only threatens informed decision-making but also increases vulnerability to exclusion and radicalization.

Objectives

- Strengthen media literacy competences among adult learners.
- Equip participants with skills to critically evaluate online sources, recognize manipulation, and avoid misinformation.
- Reduce risks of social exclusion by supporting equal participation in the digital society.
- Foster intergenerational dialogue on safe, responsible, and critical use of media.

Implementation

The programme provided interactive workshops and training modules combining theory with practice. Adults learned how to identify fake news, understand bias, and cross – check online sources. Activities included case studies, group analysis of real-world media examples, and intergenerational peer discussions, where younger participants shared digital know-how and older participants contributed life experience and critical reflection.

Results and Impact

- Adult learners reported stronger confidence in using digital media and recognizing manipulative narratives.
- Intergenerational groups developed a shared understanding of responsible digital behaviour, reducing stereotypes and building solidarity.
- The programme contributed to preventing exclusion and misinformation-related risks at the community level.
- Educators gained practical tools to integrate media literacy into adult education.

This good practice shows how digital competences and social competences are interconnected. Media literacy empowers adults to navigate the digital world critically and responsibly, while intergenerational cooperation ensures that knowledge is exchanged in both directions. For Module 3, this example illustrates how developing critical thinking through digital skills also strengthens inclusion, trust, and resilience in diverse communities.

Module 4: Inclusion

Introduction & Rationale

Inclusion in adult education is a cornerstone of European policies and practices, highlighting the urgent need to build learning systems that are fair, relevant, and accessible to everyone, regardless of race, gender, age, or background. Contemporary societies are shaped by digital transformation, migration, and demographic ageing, creating both challenges and opportunities for adult learners.

According to the UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (2022), inclusive education policies are closely linked to employability, social cohesion, and adults' ability to adapt to rapid change.

Similarly, the European Commission (2020) emphasises that adult education must go beyond basic skills such as literacy and numeracy and include intercultural learning, social participation, and digital empowerment.

Exclusion from adult learning opportunities often reinforces existing inequalities. Vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, Roma communities, older adults, and people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by limited access to inclusive and high-quality education. The OECD Skills Outlook (2023) highlights that adults with low skill levels are three times more likely to be unemployed and twice as likely to experience social isolation. Therefore, inclusive adult education is not only about learning outcomes; it is also about dignity, empowerment, and the right to equal participation in education and citizenship.

This module recognises that inclusion is both a principle and a practice. As a principle, it promotes fairness and equal opportunity. As a practice, it must be embedded in curricula, institutional policies, teaching materials, and daily educational interactions. The rationale for centring this module on inclusion is to ensure that no adult learner is excluded from educational and digital opportunities. As demonstrated in the above-mentioned reports (UNESCO, 2022; European Commission, 2020; OECD, 2023; Council of Europe, 2022), inclusive education strengthens communities and reduces structural discrimination.

What learners will learn / Skills & Competences gained

- Develop stronger intercultural competences by showing respect for diversity, practising empathy, and resolving conflicts constructively in cross-cultural interactions.
- Strengthen social skills through effective communication, collaborative teamwork, and active participation in community initiatives.
- Use essential digital tools and technologies to access information, communicate effectively, and participate confidently in digital society, supporting their digital inclusion.
- Build self-confidence and resilience by applying strategies that enhance self-efficacy in new social and professional contexts.
- Develop basic civic and advocacy skills to participate more actively in democratic processes and community decision-making.

Theoretical Justification

Why does inclusion matter today?

Excluding adults from digital education and limiting their access to digital skills in work, education, and public life increases social inequalities. Research (European Commission, Digital Education Action Plan, 2020) shows that digital divides often lead to broader social divides. According to UNESCO (2022), digital literacy is becoming a prerequisite for active participation in society and decision-making processes, making inclusive access to digital learning essential.

Furthermore, evidence confirms that inclusive adult education improves employability, civic engagement, and overall well-being. The OECD Skills Outlook (2023) indicates that adults engaged in lifelong learning have higher employment rates, better mental health outcomes, and stronger civic participation. The Council of Europe (2022) also highlights inclusive education as a key factor in building democratic and resilient societies.

From the perspective of social cohesion, inclusive learning environments foster intercultural dialogue and peaceful coexistence. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, “The United Nations was created in the belief that dialogue can triumph over discord, that diversity is a universal virtue and that the peoples of the world are far more united by their common fate than they are divided by their separate identities” (United Nations). UNESCO further defines intercultural dialogue as a transformative process grounded in mutual respect, empathy, and openness to different perspectives (UNESCO). In multicultural and ageing societies, preventing marginalisation and promoting solidarity are essential. Studies (UNESCO, 2019; European Skills Agenda, 2020) confirm that inclusive education directly supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

In terms of policy alignment, the EU’s European Education Area (2025 target) states that at least 47% of adults aged 25–64 should participate in learning activities within a 12-month period. The European Education Area recognises inclusion as a strategic priority, emphasising that employability skills must be combined with civic and sustainability competences. Adult education is therefore not only a workforce policy but also a long-term social investment that strengthens democracy and well-being.

In summary, promoting inclusion in contemporary societies is fundamental to creating equal opportunities, particularly in access to learning. Inclusive adult education enables individuals not only to cope with rapid change, but to thrive as active, informed, and engaged citizens (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2022; European Commission, 2020; Council of Europe, 2022; European Skills Agenda, 2020).

Good practices

1st Good Practice: EduSenior: Improving the Quality of Senior Education

Context and Background:

*EduSenio*r was a joint project of Polish and Norwegian organisations working with older adults, funded under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 Education Programme. The project aimed to improve the quality of senior education provided in neighbourhood centres in Poland, particularly in the Tri-City area (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot).

The programme included training and job shadowing in Norway, piloting educational methods with senior groups, and developing a practical guidebook and training modules for adult education providers. *EduSenior* responded to the growing need for meaningful, participatory learning opportunities for older adults and promoted lifelong learning within a supportive, community-based environment.

The project addressed two main target groups:

- educators and facilitators working with seniors in community settings, and
- older adults (60+) who participated in pilot learning activities.

It was developed in response to increasing digital exclusion and the lack of accessible, empowering learning opportunities for seniors.

Objectives:

The main objective of *EduSenior* was to improve the quality of non-formal education for older adults by strengthening the competences of educators working with senior learners. The project sought to make adult education more inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the real needs of older people, with particular attention to digital and civic competences.

More specifically, *EduSenior* aimed to:

- Empower educators and facilitators by equipping them with new tools, knowledge, and methods to support senior learners effectively.
- Increase the engagement and self-confidence of older adults, especially those at risk of digital exclusion.
- Develop practical resources (a guidebook and training modules) for wider use by adult education providers in Poland and beyond.

- Promote international cooperation and exchange of good practices between Poland and Norway in the field of senior education.

Implementation:

- The project was implemented between January 2022 and December 2023.
- It began with a needs assessment involving both educators and seniors.
- Polish educators participated in international mobility, including training and job shadowing in Norway.
- A local pilot programme was conducted with senior learners in three community centres in Gdańsk.
- A guidebook and training modules were developed based on feedback from the pilot phase.
- A dissemination event was organised in Gdańsk, involving NGOs, educators, and local authorities.
- All developed resources were made publicly available.

Methodology used:

- The study circle approach was applied – participatory, dialogue-based, and learner-centred.
- The project combined international training, local pilot groups, and the development of practical resources.
- It focused on digital skills, civic engagement, and intergenerational cooperation.
- Small, consistent groups were formed to build trust, encourage peer learning, and ensure active participation.

Outcomes:

EduSenior strengthened the competences of ten adult educators through international training and mobility activities. During the pilot phase, thirty senior participants in Gdańsk reported increased confidence, motivation, and a stronger sense of belonging to a learning community.

A key outcome was the development of a practical guidebook and training modules tailored to the needs of older adults. The project also produced a catalogue of good practices, presented during the dissemination event, and contributed to reducing digital and educational exclusion among senior The resources developed remain sustainable and replicable, offering valuable tools for institutions in Poland and beyond.

Conclusion:

EduSenior is highly transferable and can be implemented in a wide range of adult education settings, particularly those working with older adults in non-formal or community-based environments. The success of the practice lies in the simplicity and flexibility of the study circle methodology, as well as the availability of ready-to-use materials developed during the project.

The approach can be applied in senior clubs, libraries, neighbourhood centres, NGOs, and other institutions aiming to provide meaningful learning opportunities for older adults. Study circles require minimal infrastructure – mainly a motivated group of participants and a trained facilitator – making the model adaptable to both urban and rural contexts. *EduSenior* demonstrates that, with proper preparation and commitment, inclusive and empowering education for older adults can be successfully implemented in diverse communities.

2nd Good Practice: TUECHTIG: Coworking & Education for People with Disabilities

Context and Background

TUECHTIG is an innovative and inclusive co-working space operated by KOPF, HAND + FUSS. Its concept is based on creating a professional and educational environment that is accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. The initiative promotes flexible work arrangements, professional development, and equal participation in social and economic life.

Supported by myAbility e.V. and funded through Aktion Mensch, public innovation grants, and social investment, *TUECHTIG* responds to the urgent need for spaces that combine productivity, empowerment, and inclusion. It addresses structural barriers that often prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in professional and educational environments.

Objectives

TUECHTIG is committed to ensuring that diversity is recognised, respected, and valued. Its primary goal is to create a shared working environment where people with and without disabilities collaborate on equal terms, based on mutual respect and support.

To achieve this, the initiative focuses on:

- Providing a fully accessible coworking and learning space where people with and without disabilities can collaborate.
- Offering peer-led workshops tailored to the needs of adults with disabilities and their allies.
- Empowering participants through exposure to entrepreneurship, digital tools, and community leadership.
- Raising awareness and transforming social perceptions regarding inclusion, productivity, and professional agency.

The project operates as a small ecosystem, integrating space design, community building, training, and social innovation.

Implementation

TUECHTIG was implemented through several structured phases:

- Design phase: The space was co-created with users and incorporates universal design features such as adjustable desks, tactile signage, low-stimulation areas, and barrier-free navigation.
- Community building: Outreach to networks of adults with disabilities, caregivers, and educators helped shape the initial programming.

- Programme launch: Workshops on digital skills, accessible design, storytelling, and entrepreneurship were introduced, often led by peer mentors with lived experience.
- Ongoing operation: The space offers coworking memberships, accessible meeting rooms, and a continuous calendar of inclusive training activities.
- Impact monitoring: Feedback loops, accessibility audits, and participant testimonials support continuous improvement.

Methodology

TUECHTIG applies a participatory, learner-centred approach grounded in co-creation and peer learning. Universal design principles shape the physical environment, while mentorship and lived experience ensure relevance and trust.

Programmes combine digital skills, entrepreneurship, and creative expression. Activities are delivered in small, consistent groups to foster dialogue, collaboration, and solidarity. The approach integrates professional development with community empowerment.

Outcomes

- Over 200 individuals participated in learning activities, collaboration projects, or incubation initiatives within the first 18 months.
- At least 15 community-led initiatives emerged, including a neurodivergent tech collective and an accessible podcasting group.
- Participants reported increased confidence, autonomy, and professional agency.
- The model became a recognised reference point for inclusion-oriented hubs in Germany and Austria.

Conclusion

TUECHTIG represents a highly transferable model for urban areas with active adult learning sectors or social innovation ecosystems. Its flexible engagement formats (drop-in participation, hybrid sessions, and one-to-one coaching) make it adaptable to diverse learner needs.

By embedding peer learning and mentorship into all training modules and combining barrier-free infrastructure with innovative programming, *TUECHTIG* demonstrates how inclusive design can transform adult education and professional participation. The initiative reduces exclusion, strengthens autonomy, and offers a replicable framework for creating equitable, accessible, and empowering learning environments.

3rd Good Practice – CAIS CAPACITA: Inclusive Training for Marginalised Groups

Context and Background:

The CAIS CAPACITA+ programme was developed by Associação CAIS in Lisbon to address the exclusion of homeless adults and individuals experiencing extreme social vulnerability from education, training, and the labour market. These individuals often face multiple barriers, including lack of qualifications, long-term unemployment, stigma, and health challenges.

CAPACITA+ emerged as part of CAIS's broader mission of social inclusion and empowerment, combining non-formal education with employability training. The programme responds to the urgent need to rebuild autonomy, confidence, and social integration, while connecting participants with opportunities in employment, volunteering, or further training.

Objectives

The main objectives of the *CAIS CAPACITA+* programme are:

- To foster social inclusion by supporting people in vulnerable situations in developing personal, social, and vocational skills.
- To increase employability through tailored training pathways that combine practical workshops with soft skills development.
- To empower participants to regain autonomy, confidence, and a sense of purpose.
- To bridge the gap between socially excluded individuals and the labour market, education, and community networks.
- To promote active citizenship, dignity, and personal growth through personalised mentoring and goal-setting.
- To break cycles of marginalisation by creating opportunities for long-term transformation rather than short-term assistance.

The programme also aims to build relationships of trust, provide structured and consistent support, and help participants develop realistic life plans aligned with their interests and capabilities.

Implementation

CAIS CAPACITA+ is delivered through a modular programme lasting several weeks. Key components include:

- Group sessions on personal development, communication, emotional regulation, and life planning.
- Practical workshops (digital skills, arts, crafts, or other thematic areas depending on partnerships).
- Individual mentoring, offering personalised guidance, motivation, and follow-up support.
- Exposure visits to institutions and employers, familiarising participants with real-world contexts.
- Community integration moments, where participants present outcomes and share their experiences.

The programme is participant-centred and adapts to individual rhythms and needs. It is currently implemented in Lisbon, with potential for replication in other contexts.

Methodology

The programme follows a participant-centred and trust-based methodology. It adapts to each individual's pace and capacities, acknowledging their background, vulnerabilities, and aspirations.

CAIS professionals and facilitators work closely with participants, building relationships based on proximity, empathy, and respect. The learning environment is safe, supportive, and non-judgemental.

Results and impact

Reported impacts include:

- Increased confidence, communication skills, and self-awareness.
- Acquisition of basic employability competences (digital literacy, CV writing, interview preparation).
- Improved emotional regulation and clearer personal goals.
- Reintegration into the labour market, volunteering, or further training pathways for some participants.
- Strengthened social connections and reduced isolation.
- Enhanced institutional partnerships, contributing to sustainable impact beyond each programme cycle.

Conclusion

CAIS CAPACITA+ demonstrates how non-formal, holistic, and trust-based adult education can transform the lives of people excluded from mainstream systems. Its success lies in combining practical training with emotional support while building bridges to community networks and employment opportunities.

The model is transferable to other contexts, provided organisations invest in facilitator training, safe learning spaces, and strong local partnerships. Ultimately, *CAPACITA+* shows that empowerment, dignity, and personalised mentoring are essential to breaking cycles of marginalisation and fostering long-term social inclusion.

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