

WP 4 – Formulating Benchmarks

The following sections outline the final lessons learned from the project and tie them in with the issues partners started the exchange off with. The paper is structured around three topics the reader might be interested in: a) more general and very specific take-away lessons learned by the consortium in regards to current trends and challenges of the Adult Education (AE) sector (what we would like to adopt from the others), b) reflecting on how other parties can implement our success-stories, and c) the success factors of our well-performing programmes (why they are successful).

All programmes and formats referenced below are listed in more detail in the results table for WP3.

1) Lessons learned – the lessons we have learned from one another despite the differences in our AE systems

The partners in this consortium represent a range of AE provider institutions and thus face varying challenges. Despite some differences in the institutions, the types of courses delivered and the target groups, common challenges have emerged in the course of the discussions and these reflect elements central and relevant to all partners' course development strategies. Overall, sharing ideas and best practice through Train the Provider has provided all partners with a wealth of ideas and strategies for broadening and developing this programme further.

All partners agree, that it is crucial to stay on top of trends and trending topics, such as (inter-)cultural competences, to keep staff training relevant and current. A thorough analysis of what trainers need specifically in their daily work will enable our programmes to stay very close to trainers' practice and thus be applicable and transferable. The partners from Greece and Romania have shown that professional development courses need to be attached to concrete gain such as a promotion, full employment or a raise in order to attract participants. In order to motivate freelance trainers (Norway and Germany) to further improve their skills it is necessary to let them know exactly what the value added is for their practice, because, as freelancers they rarely have the time to spare for training as it is. As much as they might want to further their knowledge, time spent on their own training is time not spent earning money and thus, the benefits must be clear.

Greece and Romania have well-established and highly demanding national certification scheme in place which require trainers to be certified by a central agency in order to work. While similar initiatives

have been attempted in Germany, implementation is still far off and currently the profiling of competences is voluntary (but results in a certificate). Similarly, there is currently no centralised certification process in Norway. One cannot safely state whether nationally certifying the adult trainers is the answer for organisations that provide training. On the one hand such a procedure ensures minimum standards for adult trainers' competences across the country, on the other hand a whole mechanism has to be set up, costs will occur and decisions as to who is going to pay for them have to be made. The process is similar to a driving licence: anyone who obtains it has a specific set of knowledge and skills. Not everybody is a great driver. It seems that there is a valid argument for the countries that lack the certification process to start a dialogue with all the adult education stakeholders concerning the advantages and disadvantages of establishing such a process, be it at national or organisational level. We have heard from National Bank of Greece SA that both their full and part time trainers are certified by the Greek National Organisation as well as by their own in house process, which shows that an alternative way could be the certification of trainers from the organisations that employ them. In Romania, the two continuing vocational training courses for adults (teachers in the pre-university education system versus other adult categories), which are carried out in a well-defined normative and legislative framework, make it possible to adapt the training programme to the specificities of the training group and specific training needs. Furthermore, all partners agree on the undisputed value of communicative, immersive and innovative approaches in training and believe in prioritising trainers' needs the programme design process.

Through intense exchange all partners have found inspiration from the others' programmes and approaches and will implement a number of elements in the future.

FUØst draws potential benefit for its development from the following formats:

- Round tables (AEWB) - FUØst will try adopting them twice a year. Topics could include typical challenges relevant to the organisation, for example: materials development, LMS (moodle), implementing technology in the classroom, blended learning courses, teaching method and strategies. In-house experts will lead the sessions.
- "multiplier trainings" (AEWB) to train teachers and trainers centrally with the intention of those newly trained to, in turn, train teachers and trainers in other parts of the country. This will prove particularly relevant given our current centralisation ('FUSION') process.

- E-learning format critical thinking and innovation (HAEA) – Taken from “Critical thinking: Innovative and creative teaching/learning methods” FUØst will try adapting an E-learning platform format for critical thinking and innovation in future plans for the organisation’s current ‘FUSION’ developments of different regional campuses across Norway.
- Developing Leadership in Teachers (UPIT) –some elements of UPIT’s ‘LIDO’ model will be adopted with the aim of teachers cooperating, mentoring and leading other teachers/trainers within the organisation. Useful in the classroom as well as in online/distance learning areas.

HAEA sees the following potential for its development:

- As the Association is always active in researching and experimenting with new methodologies and target groups, it seems that a future cooperation with AEWB especially in the field of their “Innovative Language Learning” will prove beneficial.
- The University of Pitesti’s “Course for developing leadership in teachers” falls within the Association’s interests regarding the further education of teachers and as such provides a good chance of cross-fertilisation of ideas and methodologies used by the two organisations.
- Finally, a transfer of educational technology from FUØst from their “Teacher Training to teach professionals in public and private sectors” and more specifically in the subject of tailoring of language courses in business and state funded organisations, will allow HAEA to address needs of organisations that employ non-Greek speaking personnel.

UPIT plans to benefit from the following approaches:

- Round Tables, as practiced by AEWB, focused on specific topic relevant within the field, chosen by participants. It will foster a more flexible and tailored approach of training the adults.
- HAEA’s Art-based learning methodology to develop multicultural competences of trainers who work in a multicultural environment. The multicultural environment becomes more present and important in Romania and needs to be addressed more often.

- Extending CLIL methodology to Teacher Education programmes, as practiced by FuØst. It is necessary in order to develop the competence of communication in foreign languages and the specifics of integrated curriculum.

AEWB will consider the following input from partners to improve their programmes:

- Blended and online learning options (as used by UPIT in their “Teacher Leadership” course, HAEA in the online version of their “The Use of Art by Trainers in order to develop the Critical and Creative Thinking of their Trainees” programme as well as by FuØst in in their Teacher Training Programmes), which are currently not too prominent in its portfolio;
- The use of alternative learning spaces, as used by HAEA in their “the Use of Art...”-programme, represents a useful tool. The immersive nature of learning spaces such as museums stresses the experience and heightens the degree of sensory involvement of participants. It will serve a number of subject areas from cultural trainings to language and health trainings.
- AEWB recognises a need to rely more heavily on on-demand trainings, which allow courses tailored to the needs of providers. This requires specialised skills and staff who will be able to adjust and tailor courses according to customers’ specific requirements. On-demand courses are one way of tackling AEWB’s main problem – cancellation rates. Increased offer of tailored courses, as outlined by FuØst, will help address this issue.
- Increased standardisation and mapping of skills has been a hotly debated topic in Germany over the last years, the very stringent systems in place in Romania and Greece are a valuable source of inspiration in this context.

2) How could others implement practices and formats we deem a success

Programs and formats shared by the different partners in this project have included: development and increased focus on strategies for peer learning as part of a communicative / learner focussed method; orientation programs for teachers new to an organisation including refresher workshops on communicative and CLIL teaching methods; expert round table meetings as part of a course program; running seminars and workshops in a variety of locations or settings such as galleries or museums and

other areas; and a range of other formats and practices. More detail regarding these useful and very implementable ideas can be found in the WP3 table.

Needs analysis:

In order to analyse clients' needs, a more rigid methodology which will be able to select data from all the providers' clients is needed. Training providers that are able to contact and gather data by a wide variety of the stakeholders who benefit directly or indirectly from their training programmes seem to be more successful in creating a training menu that is more interesting to the end users' organisations which, in turn, results in a greater number of participants across the board. A thorough stakeholder analysis makes it much easier for providers to assess their current and prominent needs and this will, in turn, allow them to focus their course programmes on relevant topics and approaches.

It can therefore be safely stated that any training provider organisation needs to initialise a research, concerning the profile of the end users of its trainings, be it on an individual or organisational level. The synthesis of these profiles will eventually lead to the identification of a plethora of stakeholders which, in turn, will enable the provider to investigate and identify the training needs with greater accuracy. From this point onwards it is rather straightforward to create and plan the implementation of suitable training programmes.

Methodology:

The identified methodologies, procedures and tools for training and assessment can be generalised to groups of trainees with similar training needs. The learning process (e-learning, blended learning, webinars) is a flexible variable, depending on the category of competences, the duration of the training programme and the resources available. UPIT also reiterate the need to certify learner competences (learning outcomes) through certificates.

In their training courses partners rely heavily on collaborative, communicative and learner-focused methodology (derived from the constructivist approach and methods such as CLIL), incl. peer cooperation, presentations, mock lessons, group work, etc. In addition to an open, communicative atmosphere, in which participants have the opportunity to co-create their learning experience, they

have also benefitted from the use of immersive learning environments and alternative learning spaces, such as museums. Ultimately, much is reliant on the adaptability of the teacher.

Additionally, bringing in specialised outside expertise can enrich the training and achieve the goal of equipping trainers with specialised knowledge (e.g. a psychologist to supply tools for dealing with specific challenges to trainers in refugee courses).

Delivery:

Partners have had positive experiences with blended delivery formats combining face-to-face and online courses. Many participants view personal interaction and exchange as a vital part of their training experience, however, online trainings address issues such as timing and geographical dispersion. Thus, providers with a client base of wide geographical dispersion may benefit from establishing online platforms to ensure maximum accessibility to courses and course materials; they can also be used to create and support sustainable learning communities (e.g. through online fora). HAEA even offers both online and offline versions of their training “The Use of Art...”.

Additionally, module-based courses where participants can mix and match units according to their specific needs and which offer a flexible timeframe for completion of modules facilitate the participation of freelance trainers who do not have regular schedules and find course attendance to be a challenge.

3) Why some programmes and formats are successful – contributing factors

FUØst:

FUØst’s language courses are based largely on a communicative, learner focused method and approach. Many of the public courses follow a set curriculum while other courses for specific purposes are developed and tailored to the specific needs of a group, organisation or individual. The broad course participant base with varied needs and subsequently results in courses being conducted in a range of contexts including:

- blended learning and distance learning courses

- one-to-one as well as small and large classroom courses
- courses set at fixed and varied times.

The varied breadth of the course offer requires flexible and high quality teacher capacity using communicative and CLIL methodology and other strategies and approaches in the classroom.

It is in this way that FUØst feel the formats listed in WP3 are or will be successful. The listed formats and practices are both compatible with communicative and CLIL methodology in an AE language acquisition context and in this sense are incorporable into existing programs for building or supporting teacher capacity and competence.

In order to be successful FUØst need a range of measures through which to support and help develop teacher/facilitator capacity. Presently, the teachers benefit from being offered regular in-house workshop and training opportunities to share best practice and develop capacity to better manage the wide range of teaching contexts they face. Using a “Classroom Training” format, amongst other benefits, participants both develop their teaching skills and capacities in a training session environment but also develop as a team or community. Using a “webinar” or “online classroom” environment caters for the training and development needs of teachers/trainers challenged in terms of time/schedules or the tyranny of ‘distance’.

HAEA:

HAEA’s successful training programme for the Development of Critical Thinking through the use of Art was conceived as a result of research on barriers to learning (of which prejudices, assumptions and stereotypes form an important part) and work carried out through the European Union programme ARTIT (during which a methodology for using pieces of Art in training was developed). Following these two elements, it was decided that one could combine them and develop further the use of Art through observation in order to promote critical thinking of one’s own trainees.

Critical questions that address assumptions, methodology to choose the suitable work of Art, and a step by step development of critical thinking were subsequently developed by HAEA, only to take their final shape in the relative Train the Trainer programme, which enables its participating trainers to learn

how implement the above. The programme's success is largely due to its experiential character, the innovative methodology and the fact that a similar programme was not available at the time.

HAEA has also created the e learning format of the programme in order to reach larger audiences and participants of a greater geographical dispersion. As it was believed that a testimony from a well-known organisation would enhance the image of the programme, HAEA successfully submitted the programme to UNESCO and thus it is now conducted "Under the auspices of UNESCO Hellas".

The programme for developing competences of trainers who work in a multicultural environment was implemented in April 2019 with excellent comments from the participants and will be repeated during the following academic year. Apart from the classroom sessions, the programme allows (for one half of its duration) study visits to a number of specialised for migrants and refugees Non-Profit and Non-Governmental organisations, which enable the future trainers to acquire an immediate hands on experience with some of the main stakeholders who operate in the multicultural field.

As stated before, the main problem that HAEA is facing is the size of the market it services as the country is facing a financial crisis and there is lack of motivation from the part of the would-be trainees to participate and organisations to bear the relative cost. The Association, having strong know how on specific subjects has to promote its programmes to the European market of adult education. Apart from focusing to the international market, the following key points have to be observed as successful training programmes have all proven to share as common elements the:

- address of an identified training need
- use of an innovative way of delivering the teaching
- presentation of the topics to the potential trainees in an engaging way
- emphasis on the benefits for the participant
- flexibility to change depending on the evaluation feedback that is received

UPIT:

UPIT appreciate that a successful adult training strategy can be drawn from the following variables:

- correlating the curriculum with the training needs of potential learners, with the objectives of the training programme and the skills learned by potential learners (expressed as learning outcomes)
- the innovative and constructive character of the training strategy regarding the training methodology and the resources which facilitate the transfer of experience and good practice

The “ROMANIAN LANGUAGE PREPARATORY YEAR” programme is successful through its innovative approaches of teaching and learning methodologies like peer learning, follow-up evaluation, exchanges of good teaching and learning practices between teachers, the use of individual and group exercises/debates/projects carried out by the participants and the integration of ICT in the learning process (audio/video),

“STEPS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - training programme for didactic degree II” contributes to the continuous professional development of teachers through the use of follow-up evaluation, intensive peer learning, good teaching practices exchange between teachers, examples of good practice developed by the participants, applications /reflections/ individual and group exercises/ debates/ projects carried out by the participants as well as the use of formative assessment tools (reflexive journal, course evaluation questionnaire, observation charts, summative evaluation portfolio),

The “COURSE FOR DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP IN TEACHERS” is innovative by focusing on developing the leadership of teachers through interactive activities and a practical approach. Face-to-face activities are combined with online mentoring and tutoring, the examples of good practice are being developed by the participants through applications /reflections/ individual and group exercises/ debates/ projects carried out by the participants. It uses formative assessment tools (reflexive journal, course evaluation questionnaire, observation charts, summative evaluation portfolio)

AEWB:

The selection of programmes and courses identified as successful under WP3 all address specific sector needs and offer answers to our initial issues, as identified in WP1.

AEWB’s “Learning to teach” addresses the lack of standardisation and the market insecurities connected with this. Trainers get certificates as proof of their skills, which promise better chances in the job market and increase their confidence in their own training. Institutions, in turn, can rely on

proper training and background knowledge as outlined in the certificates, lending a certain degree of comparability to the hiring process. “Round Tables” address the need for networking and exchange among peers on current or prominent issues and trends. This is especially important for freelancers who often feel isolated and value exchange with others in the same situation.

“Multiplier trainings” are specific to regions with vast rural areas where trainers are hard to reach (geographic dispersion) and are unable to travel far to attend courses. The solution to train multipliers centrally, who will carry the knowledge into the more remote areas is addressing issues of geography. “Tailor-made” and “On-demand Trainings” fit the specific needs of an institution as well as their time-frame. They provide better service by looking at customers’ individual needs. This approach addresses cancellation rates and thus benefits both provider and customer.

“Intercultural trainings” address the challenges faced by many trainers in immigration societies who lack the tools to deal with cultural pluralism. These trainings benefit both learners and trainers by increasing trainers’ sensitivity to specific and current needs and challenges and providing tools to cope with difficult situations (faced with traumatised clients, etc.).

Generally, courses with a short time span (ideally one day) are the most successful, mirroring the specific needs of a freelance-based and short-staffed AE system in Germany.

The items are outlined in more detail in the table created in WP3. Ultimately, their success arises from:

- addressing specific sector needs in a practice-centred fashion
- facilitating exchange and networking among a freelance workforce
- allowing flexibility through tailoring formats to specific needs
- addressing customers’ individual needs
- offering expertise and skill practice relevant to specialised groups
- offering input on current trends