Executive report

This research was carried out in the context of the Erasmus+ project: NEVer TOO Late – New Tools for Learning in Adult Age jointly by the project consortium and coordinated by lernraum.wien / VHS Wien.

The research was conducted in three steps using a mixed method approach including 1) desktop research (looking at important international and national documents about basic skills education), 2) a quantitative analysis of ELINET statistics as well as 3) a series of qualitative interview with learners and teachers in the participating countries.

The desktop research showed that the main emphasis in policy papers seems to be on employability and access to education, in most cases with an economic rationale. In contrast to this, on the one hand, the interviews with learners showed a bundle of motivations with communication and social contacts ranging very high and on the other the theoretical debate has been *focusing* on social participation and empowerment in the last 10 years. Motivation is very high with participants, especially in cases where courses offer additional benefits (such as in Greece) and a bit lower where courses tale place online, due to the Covid19 situation at present.

Teachers have a range of different qualifications, very seldom specific training for working in the basic skills area, with the exception of Austria and some contexts in Germany (courses for migrants).

Methods used by teachers/trainers also show a wide range and can be summed up by a number of guiding principles which are listed here:

- *Using multilingualism as a resource*
- *Using authentic texts*
- *Respect in the learning process*
- *"what I think is really important is that usually in the setting we are two facilitators in order to minimise the sense of hierarchy and establish an actual codeciding environment" (ITG1_2)*
- *"I try to establish a hood relationship with them so that they feel secure and comfortable, we do group dynamics and encourage them to express their emotions" (ITS_2)*

NEVER TOO LATE

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Methods mentioned in the interviews are:

- *Using multilingualism as a resource*

- *Pictorial impulses*

- *Dialog construction*

- *Using authentic text*

- *Reflexion activities*

- *Group work / Pair work*

- *Project work*

- *Free creative writing*

- *Using YouTube videos / Watching films and videos*

- *Listen to experience of other learners*

- *Individualisation of teaching*

- *Games (e.g. UNO for numbers and colours) and gamification in general*

- *Use of realia*

- *Use of motivational stickers (very good, well done etc.)*

Finally….

If we turn back to the main arguments for basic education from national and international policy papers any mainly consider economic factors these data that show growth in GDP with a rise of basic skills-qualifications, we find them little convincing. From a holistic and humanitarian perspective, the growth in life satisfaction, political participation and democratic activity by people seems to be the more relevant factor, especially for the group of addressees of the present project – but always with the critical awareness that education alone does not change societies and general inequalities.

This means that we need to be aware of what is discussed as "wider benefits" of literacy education: growth in self-esteem, political participation and what Bourdieu called "social capital", which means turning away from the pure technical perspective on literacy to the empowerment perspective, which is exactly what the present project intends to do.